Stephen Vincent Benét Reviews Thomas Wolfe's New Novel

The Saturday Review of Literature

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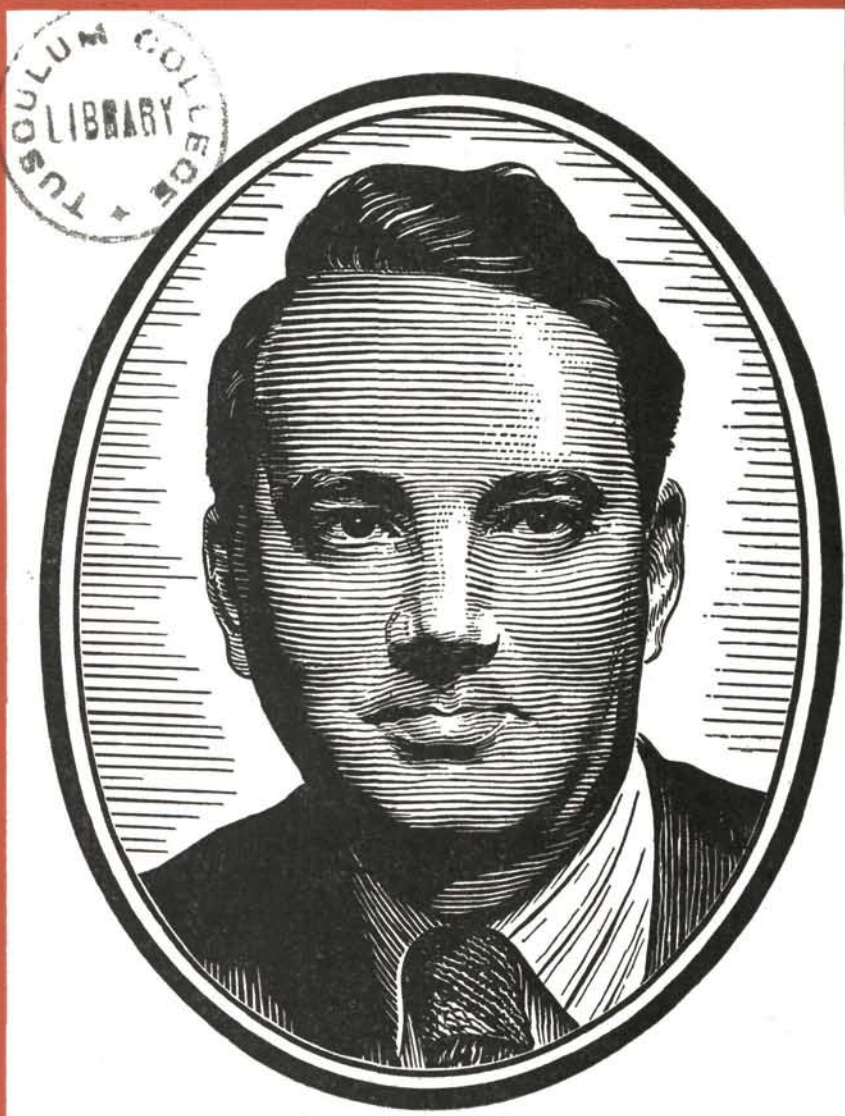

THOMAS WOLFE: "When all is said and done he will stand with Melville" . . . *(See page 5)*

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The Saturday Review of Literature

The Negro and American Culture

V. F. CALVERTON

IN the 1920's to be a Negro writer was to be a literary son of God. It was like being a proletarian writer in the 1930's. A black skin, or a brown, or a pale "yaller" was even better, was like saying to a speakeasy proprietor in those days, "I'm a friend of Robert Benchley," or "Carl Van Vechten." Those days seem nostalgically reminiscent now; from a literary point of view, they were gay, lively, melodramatic, explosive. They were days when "things rode in the saddle," money was triumphant, and littérateurs, of all three sexes, were excitedly and excitingly romantic. Artists of every variety were against the world, especially the photographic representation of it, and their revolt in the form of dadism, expressionism, cubism, vorticism, *vers librism,* was all an attempt to escape esthetic responsibility.

The Negro was only one of the unusual groups pampered by the intellectual plutocrats. Negro literature became the literature of a newly-found people (though the Negroes had been with us for centuries) just as Jewish literature, with its Perez, Sholom Aleichem, David Pinski, and Sholom Asch, became part of our heritage. Americans in the twenties, with gold jingling in their pockets or in the pockets of their best friends, favored things foreign or different. For a time it appeared as though Negro literature was the most important in the country. The Negro writer during the twenties was a powerful social magnet. White writers boasted of dining with James Weldon Johnson, lunching with Burghardt Du Bois, having cocktails with Walter White (who, in fidelity to his name, was actually whiter than most of the whites with whom he supped, drank, and debated).

This was the great Negro Renaissance; it marked the birth of the new Negro—although the vast majority of Negroes in the country never heard of it. The new Negro to the latter was just the same old Negro they had always known, except that he had gone literary and mixed with white snobs. Langston Hughes, one of the leading Negro writers, put it well when he wrote:

> White people began to come to Harlem in droves. They packed the expensive Cotton Club on Lenox Avenue. But I was never there because the Cotton Club was a Jim Crow Club for gangsters and moneyed whites. They were not cordial to Negroes except celebrities like Bojangles. Harlem Negroes did not like the Cotton Club. Nor did Harlem like the growing influx of whites after sundown, flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang, and getting the best tables so as to sit and stare smiling at the Negro customers as if watching animals in a zoo.

Many decades before, a humble Negro of the Uncle Tom stripe, James D. Corrothers, a Michiganer, complained, moaned, and wailed about the sad condition of the Negro in a white man's land, and wrote in a poem which is sociologically rememberable, two stanzas that are worth quoting:

> To be a Negro in a day like this
> Demands strange loyalty. We serve a flag
> Which is to us white freedom's emphasis.
> Ah! One must love when Truth and Justice lag,
> To be a Negro in a day like this.
>
> To be a Negro in a day like this—
> Alas! Lord God, what evil have we done?
> Still shines the gate, all gold and amethyst,
> But I pass by, the glorious goal unwon,
> "Merely a Negro"—in a day like this!

AFTER the first World War, the American Negro suddenly ceased to moan; he stood up on his own feet and not on those of any master. He had been told when he enlisted that when he returned he would be given—in the South and elsewhere—all the democratic privileges of the whites. What he came back to was a series of race riots which startled the soul of the nation. The very feeling on the part of the Negro that he was entitled to certain democratic rights was enough to stir up the "crackers" to incendiarism and murder. In almost a dozen cities barricades were erected, bricks and bombs were flung, shots were fired, dead bodies strewed the streets; only after the national guard in the respective cities was summoned was peace temporarily restored.

The answer to this challenge was no wail or moan. No Corrothers arose to sadden the air with an elegy; instead a Claude McKay sprang up who gave an answer which will ring down

The 1920's marked the birth of the new Negro, with laughter and jazz . . .

Wood Engraving by Ilse M. Bischoff from "Fine Prints of the Year," 1935

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the years. His poem, "If We Must Die," reveals the change that came over the Negro people faced with such attacks:

If we must die—let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die—oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us still be brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack
Pressed to the wall, dying—but fighting back!

Claude McKay is one of the most interesting of the young Negro writers. He was perhaps the first of the Negro writers "to go radical" and that was long before it became a fashionable pastime for Negro literati to call themselves "Reds." In later days a large number of Negro writers made their living from the "Reds" and more than a few of them went to Moscow in order to pick up an extra living there. Claude McKay never resorted to such intellectual and financial jugglery. He was a radical before the war, was connected with *The Masses* and *The Liberator* under Max Eastman, and has never since lost his allegiance to the revolutionary cause. He went to Moscow, but, unlike many of his racial confreres, never succumbed to Bolshevik propaganda. His novel, "Home to Harlem," published in 1928, caused a sensation in this country, but it was not half as good as his next novel, "Banjo," one of the memorable novels of the decade. Other books followed, but none had marked success. McKay caught something of life wherever he saw it, met it, felt it, in Harlem, in Africa, in Asia, and he transmuted it into something truly poetic because basically he was more of a poet than a novelist—more of a poet than anything else. His volume of poetry, "Harlem Shadows," which contained much of his earlier and more eloquent verse, was a contribution to American poetry that has been reprehensively neglected. The day will come, and shortly, I hope, when that volume will be recognized, along with his other verse, as something unique in our literature. It does not possess the sedate calm or the disciplined severity of Edwin Arlington Robinson's verse, or the crisp terseness of Robert Frost's, but it possesses something else: a lush, liquescent quality like fruit plucked in equatorial gardens, and if it gushes over at times and is too rich, it is because it is too tropical for Anglo-Saxon taste. No other American poet, white, black, brown, or red, has ever surrendered to such pagan impulses with such pagan zeal.

But McKay was not the only Negro poet to revolt against white dominancy and white snobbishness. There were many. Leading among them was Langston Hughes, who lacked Claude McKay's convictions when it came to political matters, but who spoke out without hesitation when it came to American mores and lashed into the American Bourbons with unabated ferocity. In terms of America Hughes has been most valiant and courageous, and it is with that aspect of his career that I wish to deal. Nothing expresses the challenge of the Negro to the white man better than Hughes's poem, "I, Too:"

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes.
But I laugh
And eat well
And grow strong.
Tomorrow
I'll sit at the table
When company comes,
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen"
Then.
Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed,—
I, too, am America.

THIS poem is part of the battle against Jim Crowism and against all forms of discrimination which suggest it. The Negro insists he is neither inferior nor superior; just equal to the white man and to be treated as an equal if our democracy is not to be proved a sham. This spirit dominates his romantic poetry as well as his realistic. In the nineteenth century his love poetry was soft, sweet, and sentimental; in the twentieth it is charging and challenging, like a Lovelace dashing to the wars. This change can be seen in the bitter, unsentimental love-poem of Langston Hughes, "Song For a Dark Girl":

Way down South in Dixie,
(Break the heart of me)
They hung my black young lover
To a cross roads tree.

Way down South in Dixie
(Bruised body high in air)
I asked the white Lord Jesus
What was the use of prayer.

Way down South in Dixie
(Break the heart of me)
Love is a naked shadow
On a gnarled and naked tree.

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Thomas Wolfe's Torrent of Recollection

YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN. By Thomas Wolfe. New York: Harper & Bros. 1940. 743 *pp.* $3.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

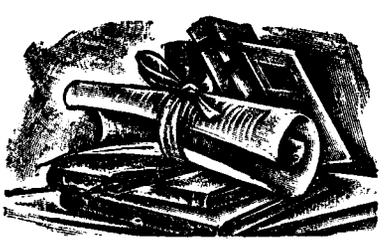
THIS posthumous novel continues and concludes the story of George Webber—the story of Thomas Wolfe—the story of seeking and finding that is at the back of all the work which Wolfe was allowed to do. They were always saying—the well-informed and the critical—that, if he could stand off from himself, be more objective, tame, and order the extravagances of his power—well, well, then he might become the really great novelist, the conscious artist, all that sort of thing.

It was good advice for nine writers out of ten, but his power was not that sort of power. In this book, as in its predecessor, 'The Web and the Rock," it is shown that he came to know himself, his strength and his weaknesses, much more clearly and objectively than was supposed. But that knowledge did not make any difference. He had to write as he wrote. He had to draw upon the giant web, the torrent of recollection, the all-feeling exploratiyeness, for everything in American earth, draw upon it and pour it forth again with shouts and cries, a river of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, memories, a river deafening the ears and stunning the eyes but not to be forgotten while Mississippi ran. "The forgotten moments and unnumbered hours came back to me with all the enormous cargo of my memory, together with lost voices in the mountains long ago, the voices of the kinsmen dead and never seen, and the houses they had built and died in, and the rutted roads they trod upon and every unrecorded moment."

That is how the work was done. He lacked taste at times, he was often verbose and rhetorical. He was fond of certain rubber stamps of dialect and never got over them. He was so prodigal of talent that he could and did write a thousand passages as good as the one I have quoted above. He was so little self-critical that, when his ear and his genius deserted him momentarily, he could write such appalling English as "Aristocrats of ancient lineage who had always held to a tradition of stiff-necked exclusiveness could be seen chatting familiarly with the plebeian parvenus of the new rich." He committed the errors of a giant—a small man can write bad prose but it takes a Dickens to assassinate Little Nell. And, when all is said and done, he will stand with Melville.

"You Can't Go Home Again" is the story of a man's pilgrimage, with its successive returns that meet with defeat, its successive reachings out for something that, even when grasped, eludes the hand. George Webber returns to Esther Jack and for a time they resume their old relation. But love is not enough—the two lives are too disparate—and the relation ends. He returns to Libya Hill and the deep roots of his childhood—and finds it in the frenzy of the boom, a city of lost men. He returns to the Germany he loved—and must say farewell to it—it is being delivered over to something old and evil. His first book brings him a brief celebrity and the hatred of his own people of Libya Hill—his second book brings him fame—and he sees through Lloyd McHarg the huge, restless disillusion that comes with fame. You can't go home again—not even to the tried friend, Foxhall Edwards. So stated, the book sounds like a study in disillusion. And is nothing of the sort.

It is written with all Wolfe's furious energy, with his devouring zest for all sorts of different human beings, with his amazing gift for sucking the very last drop of juice out of a character or a scene. It contains some telling, and some very heavy-handed, satire on literary life in New York. It will be read for that and people will babble over the various names. And none of that part is going to matter, in time, except for Piggy Logan's circus at the Jacks's where Wolfe has caught a genuine horror and a genuine scorn. The party itself, the sudden irruption of Piggy Logan's senseless young friends and the effect of the monstrous little circus of wire dolls on those who watch it—these are beautifully done. The first that follows is both well done and badly done—very few people could have done it at all and yet it does not



quite come off. A good deal of the rest of the satire is a dropping of five-hundred-pound bombs to demolish gnats. The lion-hunters described in the chapter of that name shouldn't, somehow, have mattered as much as they did to George Webber.

They don't, in the end—in the real plan and mass of the book. For, though there are extraneous chapters—though "You Can't Go Home Again" contains some of Wolfe's worst writing as well as much of his best—there is a clear, though winding path through the great forest of words and incidents and memories. There is a line, and a mature line. George Webber does grow up, not merely by fiat. There are such brilliant single incidents as that of Mr. Katamoto and that of the fantastic, believable meeting with Lloyd McHarg. But, more than that, though many things on the way were vanity, George Webber's pilgrimage was not vanity, and we do not feel that it was. The book ends neither in doubt nor in disillusion. It ends, in the remarkable last chapter, with a cry of faith.

> I believe that we are lost here in America but I believe we shall be found. . . . I think the life which we have fashioned in America and which has fashioned us—the forms we made, the cells that grew, the honeycomb that was created—was self-destructive in its nature, and must be destroyed. I think these forms are dying and must die just as I know that America and the people in it are deathless, undiscovered, and immortal, and must live.
>
> I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us. And I think that all these things are certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon. . . .

The prose mounts to its moving end, with its strange premonition of death.

> To lose the earth you know, for greater knowing; to lose the life you have, for greater life; to leave the friends you loved, for greater loving; to find a land more kind than home, more large than earth—

These are great words, greatly spoken. To our loss, they come from the dead; but they speak to the living, and now. Out of passionate belief and faith they speak, and will keep on speaking, through the years, though the great tree is down and the wide and turbulent river sunk back into the ground.

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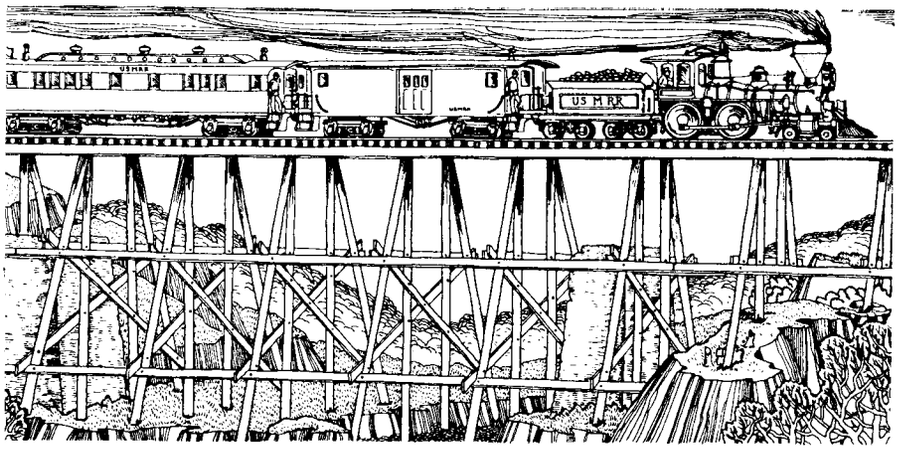
From Galena to Washington

A MAN NAMED GRANT. By Helen Todd. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1940. 598 pp., with index. $3.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

NO one has ever studied Grant's career without finding in it a peculiar mystification as well as a great and varied drama. How could a man show under certain circumstances such fatuity, lassitude, and moral strength, and under other circumstances such fatuity, lassitude, and weakness? How can we explain why the cashiered army officer clerking in a dingy leather store in Galena rose so swiftly to the heights of Vicksburg, the Wilderness, and Appomattox, or how the nation's greatest military hero could so quickly let his glories be dragged in the mire of corruption by the Babcocks and Belknaps who surrounded him in White House days? Later still we have the unfathomable gulf separating the Grant who dabbled in shady Wall Street schemes, and the Grant who so heroically completed his memoirs at Mount McGregor. Few men offer a greater challenge to the psychological biographer than this national hero who at times fell to so unheroic a level. Few stories are more striking than his—and perhaps few offer a better epitome of our national capacities and national weaknesses.

The time will come when someone, treating Grant on the scale of Freeman's "Lee," will throw a steady shaft of light into every corner of his crowded career. Meanwhile, a place exists for this particular book, in which no new facts are presented, but imagination is made to play effectively upon the facts long familiar. Miss Todd's volume is in some ways reminiscent of Hamlin Garland's life of Grant. It is vividly written, with real skill in drawing scenes and characters, with a sense for drama, and with passages of eloquent prose. It is warmly sympathetic, and by making Grant human and appealing it does something to make him understandable. Finally, Miss Todd and Hamlin Garland alike simplify the story of Grant's military feats and his years in the White House in a fashion that the historical expert may frequently deplore, but that the average reader will find pleasing. It should be added that Miss Todd makes much greater use of the novelist's license than Garland did. She invents conversations (always with a substratum of fact); she arranges scenes; she omits everything that would involve tedious explanation; and she reads Grant's mind for us in numerous situations for which no record of his thought exists.



Drawing by John O'Hara Cosgrave II from the book

Grant traveled around in special cars . . .

It is a lively book. Its general outlines are entirely accurate. It sometimes shows real insight, and the characterizations of subordinate figures like Rawlins, Dana, and Sherman are boldly and convincingly done. Though the treatment of Grant himself lacks subtlety, though it fails to resolve the mystery of his personality, it is a consistent and lifelike presentation—especially in the war years. In short, Miss Todd approaches doing for the great Civil War general what Gertrude Atherton did for Alexander Hamilton in "The Conqueror." If she does not equal that feat, it is partly because of inferior literary skill, and partly because she did not really try. Her aim was more modest; she wished merely to tell a very simple but vivid story, and that she has done.

Allan Nevins, professor of American history at Columbia University, is the author of "Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration."

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

WORKS OF ART IN FICTION

Artists and their paintings have often decorated the pages of literature. In the ten examples given below, allow 5 points if you can recall the story, and another 5 if you can remember the author. A score of 40 is par, 50 is good, 70 or better is excellent. Answers on page 10.

1. The subject of the portrait remained unchanged, while the painted image increasingly showed the marks of age and dissipation.

2. The portrait of a beautiful woman was drawn in chalk by an artist somewhat the worse for drink.

3. An artist worked frantically against approaching blindness to finish his masterpiece, "Melancholia."

4. A self-centered genius died of leprosy in Tahiti, with the walls of his room covered with his greatest works.

5. A yellowed ivy leaf painted on a brick wall outside a pneumonia patient's window kept up her interest in living until she finally recovered.

6. The portraits of Sir Ruthven Murgatroyd's ancestors stepped down from their frames and threatened him with an excruciating death unless he committed a crime every day.

7. The painter captured perfectly the lady's blushing smile, whose indiscriminate bestowal so annoyed her husband.

8. A retired business man took a year to paint the portrait of a beautiful woman; then, going broke, he auctioned the painting for $4,000, only to find that his masterpiece was to be used for advertising purposes.

9. Death caused Emmeline Grangerford to leave her masterpiece unfinished, so that the picture of a melancholy lady on a bridge had two arms folded across her breast, two stretched out in front, and two reaching toward the moon.

10. So faithfully did the painter transfer the living image of his bride to canvas that, when the last touch was added, she died.

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Nuggets and the Nation

THE REAL DANGER IN OUR GOLD. By Harry Scherman. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1940. 82 *pp.* $1.

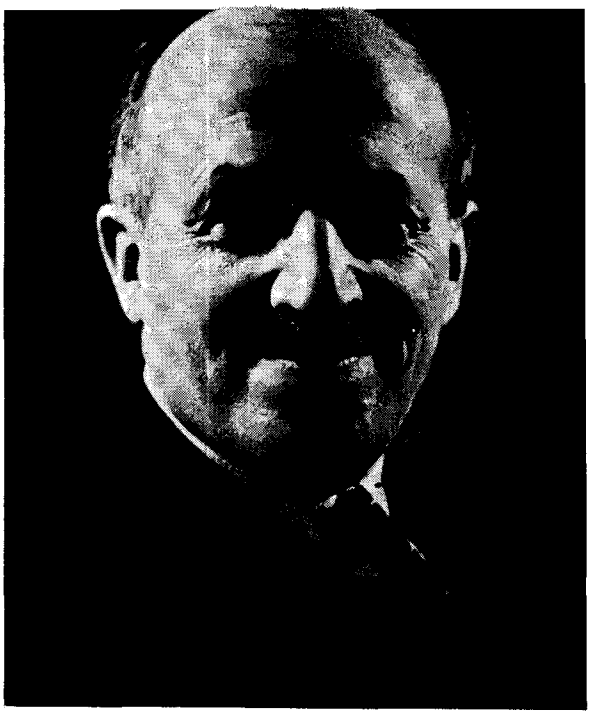
Reviewed by RICHARD T. ELY

THIS is a time in which we are threatened by many dangers. To Mr. Scherman one of the most alarming of these lies in the vast quantity of gold which is largely buried in vaults under the ground at Fort Knox. This brief volume carries a message which is addressed to the "ordinary citizen," a message which expresses the hope that "the intelligent citizens of the country will succeed in making one issue predominant —a return to domestic convertibility of our paper money and a repeal of this dangerous Gold Prohibition Law." In other words Mr. Scherman is asking a return to the gold standard. He ardently believes that no issue in the long run is more vital to the nation, and "to allow panic and anxiety about the war in Europe to blot it out will in time be disastrous." There are valid reasons for this belief in the benefits of the gold standard and they are here presented in a clear and lucid English, which places within the realm of understanding of the "ordinary citizens" a subject which is usually treated by the forbidding technicalities of economists. Mr. Scherman has made himself perfectly clear, but I doubt whether he will succeed in inducing his readers to feel as strongly as he would like them to feel on the subject. He asks his readers to vote for their Congressmen and Representatives according to the answer they give to this question. "Will you or will you not vote to repeal the Gold Prohibition Law? Will you or will you not vote to make our paper money again fully convertible into gold?" If a candidate answers no, he asks us to vote against him "no matter what else he stands for."

Let us examine the line of reasoning by which this conclusion is reached. There has been in circulation, of late, the idea that if the present trend continues, we will find ourselves holding all the gold in the world and it is pointed out with hysteria by some that other nations will consequently demonetize gold, and we will be left guarding a vast amount of metal which will have no value whatsoever. This notion deserves to be attacked and Mr. Scherman has done a good job of destroying it. The present scramble for gold certainly testifies to the fact that gold still is the best kind of "international money."

In 1933 we were gravely concerned with the problem of conserving our supply of gold and preventing its outflow. Therefore we enacted measures which gave the government a monopoly of the ownership of gold; we forbade private individuals to own gold; we rescinded our promise to pay government obligations in gold, and we reduced the gold value of the dollar by forty per cent. Today, although we hold seventy per cent of the world's supply of gold, these measures are still in force. Mr. Scherman neglects to point out, however, that this is not primarily the result of our domestic monetary policies, but rather the outcome of disturbed international relations. The danger he fears is that this huge reserve of gold will lead to further devaluation, from which the resulting "profit" will be used to clear

(*Continued on page* 19)



Harry Scherman

A Diplomat of Destiny

DIPLOMAT OF DESTINY. By Sir George Franckenstein. New York: Alliance Book Corp. 1940. 342 *pp., with index.* $3.

Reviewed by JAMES FREDERICK GREEN

THE career of Sir George Franckenstein spans three periods in the history of Austria—empire, republic, and German province. As Baron Franckenstein, son of a veteran diplomat and member of the old nobility, he served the Austro-Hungarian Empire at Washington, St. Petersburg, Rome, Tokyo, and London, as well as in Brussels during the German occupation and at the peace conference in St. Germain. After the World War he was Austrian Minister for eighteen years in London, where he safeguarded the financial stability of his country by negotiating loans with British and American bankers and enhanced its prestige by acting as patron of music and leader in social activities. Having resigned his post when the Nazis invaded Austria in March, 1938, Franckenstein was honored two months later with a knighthood from King George VI. In this autobiography, written with charm and spirit, Sir George deals with the events of his busy life down to the Anschluss; in a second volume, he plans to discuss Austria and its future role in Europe.

This diplomat of destiny offers a first-hand account of many dramatic episodes in twentieth century diplomacy. As Commercial Counsellor at the London legation in July, 1914, Franckenstein, naturally sympathetic to the Austrian cause, watched Sir Edward Grey frantically striving to avert a world war. One of the most colorful chapters tells of Baron Franckenstein's mission in 1918 to Turkey and the Caucausus, where the Central Powers were struggling to share the spoils of empire and to stem the Russian revolution. Another deals with the protracted negotiations in 1922-3 for an Austrian loan, finally placed under the administration of the League of Nations. Sir George writes effectively of the critical condition of Austria, and of his difficulties in persuading bankers and politicians that this truncated and impoverished country was the keystone of Europe. In reading these pages, one recalls with irony that it was the fall of the Vienna central bank which precipitated the worldwide financial crisis of 1931, and the fall of Vienna itself which opened the whole Danube valley to Nazi Germany.

Throughout this interesting, though sometimes superficial, diplomatic narrative run descriptions of magnificent court receptions and masked balls, recapturing a social world now shattered by two wars, and frequent comments on Sir George's two avocations —people and music. In this volume he expresses as successfully as he expressed for eighteen years in London what he terms "Austria's traditional qualities—her gay sociability, natural *joie de vivre,* and her musical soul."

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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BOOKS ARE NOT ENOUGH

THERE has been a considerable literature in recent years on the broad theme that dictatorship is unworthy of man. In fiction, a dozen or more titles come to mind, among them Phyllis Bottome's "The Mortal Storm," Louis Golding's "Mr. Emmanuel," and more recently, F. C. Hutchinson's "The Fire and the Wood;" in non-fiction, the subject has been explored even more extensively, from G. A. Borgese's "Goliath: The March of Fascism" to Hamilton Fish Armstrong's "We or They," or from Bertrand Russell's "Power" to Hermann Rauschning's "The Revolution of Nihilism."

Out of the infinite combinations of personal experiences, philosophies, and temperaments going into the making of these books, it is perhaps remarkable—and reassuring—that there should be so little difference in the underlying substance of their conclusions. Either as thinkers or observers, or both, they have felt it their duty to warn against the challenge of criminalism in government. The central, unifying thread running through and between their books is that dictatorships offer no solution to the as yet insoluble problems of democracy, and are, indeed, a retrogressive device presenting new problems in addition to old, with the fixed disadvantage that the processes of revision and repair in government necessary to meet changing conditions and changing times are frozen in the hands of a few and kept remote from the people. Dictatorship, it is made clear in all these books, is government by forfeit of rights, ruling not through consent but through contempt of and for the governed, and deriving its claim for perpetuity through enforced lack of machinery to dethrone or even denounce it.

It is not easy to measure adequately the value of these books; they have integrated and crystallized the convictions of many persons, especially those among us who were in need of first-hand, solid evidence to back up what were largely second-hand suspicions. The cumulative effect of all these books has left an important impact on the literature of our time. And yet—despite the many services of the anti-authoritarian authors—there is much that can be done that is not now being done by our writers toward exposing and dramatizing the disillusioning features of totalitarianism.

But before anything can be done, a little deflation may be in order. There is an understandable but perhaps curious disposition in the literary field to imagine that the world of books is the center of a solar system around which all thought, imagination, and action revolve. It is understandable because it is the same type of self-orientation that makes an engineer think of the universe in terms of tensions, and a farmer in terms of seasonal variations; it is curious because out of this mistaken exaggeration of its own importance have frequently grown misconceptions concerning not only the size and nature of the outer world but the things, little and big, that activate it and make it turn.

TO begin with, surveys show that not more than one person in five reads at least one book every year or two, while not more than one person in one hundred may be classified as an "habitual" book reader. More than four-fifths of the population is never directly influenced by books in book form. This world of books we speak of with such a wide sweep of the arm is a small world after all, in which the same relatively small group of people read almost all the books. It may not be too much of an assumption, then, to say that many of those who have read Russell's "Power" have also read "Rauschning's "The Revolution of Nihilism" or at least know what it is about. Similarly, it is a safe generalization to say that most of those who have read books such as these are in the anti-totalitarian camp already and are not in need of missionary work. They have turned to these books in search of stimulating and varied ideas to complement their own views or to supply factual data in support of those views.

Here, then, is a job for writers:

Spread the gospel of democracy—and we will not labor the point by launching into an elaborate definition of the term—among the non-book-reading public. Because they do not read books does not mean they are not important in determining the course we are to follow as a nation. It is very likely that when the vital decisions are made these people will have a large part in making them, probably much larger than you yourselves. If your conscience impels you to do your part toward holding off the rising tide of dictatorship, don't think that you have fulfilled your obligations to conscience and country after you have written enough to fill the pages of a book; it is a safe bet that most of the people who will read it will not have to be convinced anyway.

Books are not enough. As writers for a new audience—the non-book-readers—you may have to talk a new language and in new media. If you are anxious to accomplish the maximum amount of influence of which you are capable you will turn to newspapers, to the radio, to the periodical press, to pamphleteering. You will attempt to coin slogans that are easy to remember, rich in meaning, inspiring in substance, and capable of standing up under plenty of strain.

And if anyone should question whether all this is necessary, or why the American people have to be convinced all over again about democracy, you can say in truth that for millions of Americans the blessings of liberty are not self-evident. You can say in truth that there are relative values between freedom and food that are perhaps more obvious to those who have freedom and no food than to those who have both. You can say in truth that many millions of Americans have already lost their stake in democracy and that unless something is done about returning it to them the stakes of all of us may be loosened beyond immediate or even eventual repair.

Somehow or other these people must be convinced. They must be convinced that although democracy has not worked as well for them as it has for others, that the alternative offers nothing at all. They must be convinced—and books may not be enough to do the convincing—that their only hope—present or ultimate—lies in standing fast and resisting the totalitarian pressure of promises. It is a tough job because you will not be able to make any counter-promises, but must stand on the record. But the record, black as it is, is still so much whiter than what is held out as an alternative that any writer worth his salt can point out and dramatize this difference convincingly enough.

N. C.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thurman Arnold's Bottlenecks

SIR:—Alfred Bingham (*SRL*, Sept. 7) suggests that this is no time for Thurman Arnold to be "pouring new wine down old bottle-necks." In respect of this suggestion I should like to suggest tentatively that both Mr. Arnold and Mr. Bingham are speaking the language of fantasy. Their "bottleneck" is imaginary and metaphorical and the imaginary and metaphorical bottle to which it is presumably attached, besides being an illusion, was broken long ago. I remember well the mystic year 1890 (the year before Mr. Arnold's happy birth) that the political boys promised a bewildered nation complete salvation under the brand new Sherman Anti-trust Act. The promise has been oft-renewed. And here we are stuck in an imaginary bottle-neck!

Yours pathetically,

CHARLES A. BEARD.

New Milford, Conn.

"Writers and Conferences"

SIR:—I was astonished to read Carl Carmer's view that the net result of writing conferences is nil for the student. He also surprised me by saying that both he and Mr. Coffin felt they had exhausted their store of advice on the writing craft in six hours of discussion! What in the world do they tell their "ignorant" students the year around in college? If a writer gets nothing valuable out of two or three weeks of concentrated lectures, panel discussions, classroom work, information, guidance and personal advice, then the whole routine of education that puts emphasis on creation rather than assimilation of other people's writings ought to be scrapped. I once wrote as airily as Mr. Carmer does about the inability of schools to assist writers, but Mr. Ernest J. Brennecke, Jr., and the Columbia group taught me better. I do not comprehend why any student should feel glutted by advice, any more than why he should feel fed up by a year of college study. Each writer absorbs what he needs and applies what is useful to him. On the practical side, I doubt that any student knows that the Authors' Guild exists; Mr. Carmer must be aware that it gives advice only to dues-paying members. The cases involving royalties that I cited were not hypothetical, but actual; the contracts had already been signed by innocent authors present at the Colorado conference.

HARRY HANSEN.

New York.

SIR:—This is the first time I have ever felt impelled to take exception to an article in the *SRL*, and it seems rather a pity that the piece should be

"An intimate, frank, modern novel that preserves the sanctity of the American home."

one by a man I particularly like and whose work I particularly admire. But it is impossible to pass over Mr. Carl Carmer's conclusion about literary conferences (*SRL*, Sept. 7) that "writers of real talent . . . had wasted most of two weeks" as anything but slovenly thinking from preconception rather than evidence. Maybe writers of talent have wasted their two weeks at such places—maybe they do—but not on the evidence and for the reasons he gives. For he bases his conclusion on one quite unjustifiable assumption and two facts that will not bear analysis.

"The best inspiration," quotha, "comes from giving your ideas expression, whether they are in the air or not, and in expressing them in a way you have worked out for yourself." Obviously, the assumption here is that all the people who attend literary conferences are professional, or at least experienced writers. Being experienced writers they (*vide* Mr. C.) know which of the large assortment of ideas every writer has are sufficiently novel to coax dollars from a publisher's till and attention from readers who might prefer the movies; and they can express these ideas without falling into cliché.

Mr. C. should know better than this. If he doesn't he should be condemned to six weeks on the "slush pile" of unsolicited manuscripts on some well-known magazine. As a matter of fact there is nothing commoner, either in publishing offices or at literary conferences, than the manuscript of some talent which is just below the publishable level because the author is ignorant of some of the common taboos of his craft. When the manuscript is published anyway, there is usually cause for regret—Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner notwithstanding, or perhaps in point.

Mr. C. also annotates Harry Hansen's list of topics discussed to the effect that two of the questions could have been answered by the Author's League and the rest "have more of materialism than idealism." Dear Mr. C.: ninety per cent of the people who come to literary conferences don't know there is such a thing as the Author's League, or if they have heard of it vaguely, suspect it of being a racket. They are lovely people, often highly talented, already filled with idealisms, who need most of all to be told that editors are subject to base materialistic thoughts about how the point of view chosen by the author will affect people who have to lay money on the line for the printed product.

A literary conference can tell writers a good deal about this sort of thing. That is, although it cannot teach anyone how to write in two weeks, it can furnish the already talented writer with a number of criteria which will enable him to direct his energies into more productive fields. Perhaps more productive fields in a material sense alone; but if this be Mr. C's complaint, it is levelled not so much at literary conferences as against a modern civilization which would find the essays of Lafcadio Hearn or Christopher North's book reviews unpublishable. The staff of a conference, if it knows its business, can and does tell what is publishable, and can and does tell the members what to do to bring their manuscripts into this class.

Of course, this is best accomplished by intimate personal criticism, as Mr. C.'s anonymous correspondent points out in the letter with which he reaches his peroration. But the young writer cannot normally obtain such intimate personal criticism from a group of professionals, or even one of them, outside a literary conference. Mr. C. must surely be familiar with the aspiring youth, who turns up with a letter of introduction and a manuscript, sits on the edge of a chair and stares hypnotically, while the writer to whom he has been sent glances over the typewritten sheets, desperately thinking of something to say that will not leave too painful a wound. Mr. C. is a better man than most of us if he found time to give that beginner sincere and helpful criticism. Such criticism is to be had at literary conferences, but is it the intention of either Mr. C. or his correspondent to ask that the conference assign one staff member to give two weeks of personal attention to each member of the conference?

FLETCHER PRATT.

New York.

SIR:—I have vacationed at writers' conferences for at least six summers. I say "vacationed" because it is exactly that. It is the most pleasant way I have ever discovered of going through the motions of appearing intelligent, learning something, and yet having one h—— of a good time. I wonder how many conferees agree with me.

GEORGE THOMAS.

Amenia, N. Y.

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Challenging the Champ

THIS IS WENDELL WILLKIE. A Collection of Speeches and Writings on Present Day Issues. By Wendell Willkie, with a Biographical Introduction by Stanley Walker. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1940. 280 *pp.* $1.50.

Reviewed by LINDSAY ROGERS

IN 1928 Herbert Hoover published a post-election edition of his campaign speeches under the title, "The New Day." The present Republican candidate for the Presidency does not wait until November to see whether the verdict of the electorate will make his emanations worthy of bound covers. His book includes articles which he has published in magazines like *Fortune,* the *Saturday Evening Post,* the *Atlantic Monthly,* and the *Readers' Digest* and several quasi-political addresses. To them Mr. Stanley Walker contributes a biographical sketch which says that Mr. Willkie "has even written two excellent book reviews for the New York *Herald Tribune* literary section," of which one is reprinted.

Mr. Walker says that "Mr. Willkie has been charged with being literate, and the charge is true." The book supports this judgment. Well-phrased criticisms of New Deal legislation are moderate and persuasive. There is a reiteration of a sincere belief in the importance of civil liberties and of the dangers which they face. From a public utilities executive the discussion of the Tennessee Valley Authority experiment holds to an extremely tolerant key, but there is little or nothing of a program which gives light or leading in respect of our present discontents.

Take, for example, an article reprinted from the *Atlantic Monthly* of a little more than a year ago. It is entitled "Brace Up, America." The euphony of that phrase will make listeners to "Information Please" miss the melifluous announcement of Mr. Milton Cross, that "it's time to stump the experts." Mr. Willkie thinks that it's time to stump the New Dealers, but the questions which he puts seem sadly outdated. If there is "melancholia in a naturally spirited people" it results, in his view, "from those legislative policies that discourage the use of private capital": government spending on an enormous scale; wage fixing and payroll taxing; personal and corporate taxes which hamper investment and expansion; capricious interference with industry by regulatory commissions. A campaign of revitalization is essential. Its program should be "for the assertion of one of our more neglected liberties—that of free enterprise—with the same vigor as we assert our liberties of speech, of press, and of religious worship."

Well, the times in which Mr. Willkie is campaigning differ considerably from the times in which he wrote this article, but the change is in degree rather than in kind. Necessary defense preparations make it absurd to talk of balancing the budget. Taxes must be increased and what regulatory commissions may do to an industry which must be mobilized to produce for defense will at its worst be no more than a minor irritant. In his speech of acceptance, Mr. Willkie quoted Winston Churchill's statement on becoming Prime Minister: "I have nothing to offer you but blood, tears, toil and sweat" and added that while, as yet, "we are not reduced to 'blood and tears' we shall, nevertheless, not be able to avoid the 'toil and sweat'." But of specifications there are none; of possible methods of action and control, there is no hint.

Of the engaging personal qualities which Mr. Willkie has — qualities known to audiences that have heard him speak extemporaneously and that have seen him in the news reels—there are in these papers occasional indications. A "dark horse" for the nomination, he joked about the term as applied to himself and quoted Lord Bryce: "respectability verging on colorlessness." When he was told that Hugh Johnson thought he would make a powerful Republican candidate, he riposted: "If the government keeps on taking my business away at its recent rate, I'll soon be out of work and looking for a job. Johnson's offer is the best I've had yet." Thus far during the campaign those qualities seem to have been submerged. Perhaps a candidate for the Presidency must take himself more seriously than a candidate for the nomination. But tactics and qualities which secured a nomination may be the tactics and qualities necessary to secure an election.

In the articles that Mr. Willkie wrote and the speeches that he has delivered, references to the present occupant of the White House are extremely rare. In the speech of acceptance, Mr. Willkie agreed with the President in helping Great Britain with our "material resources" and criticized "Mr. Roosevelt" because of "inflammatory statements and manufactured panics" and because he "has been slow to take the American people into his confidence." Yet in the months that are coming the fate of this country depends less on what the occupant of the White House wants to do than on how efficient he is in proceeding to do it. That is the most important issue that confronts the electorate.

The Republicans nominated a book reviewer . . .

Mr. Willkie has not yet faced it, and the reason, I think, is not because he prefers to take refuge in clichés but because the dual role that the President of the United States plays hampers the style of aspirants for his double job. The President of the United States is chief of state but also a political leader. The fact that he is head of the State protects him from the fire that his political opponents wish to direct against him as a political leader. Hence the tendency to handle him with gloves. The belief is that even those voters who are not admirers of an occupant of the White House will not relish criticism of him that is too harsh. I sometimes think this is a delusion. President Roosevelt thought it was when he campaigned in 1932. He took the offensive not only against Republican policies but against Republican leadership — Mr. Hoover. As yet his offensive is concentrated on New Deal policies, some of which he approves, and most of which, as President he would have to accept.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* by Oscar Wilde.
2. *The Face on the Floor,* by Antoine D'Arcy.
3. *The Light That Failed,* by Rudyard Kipling.
4. *The Moon and Sixpence,* by Somerset Maugham.
5. *The Last Leaf.* by O. Henry.
6. *Ruddigore,* by W. S. Gilbert.
7. *My Last Duchess,* by Robert Browning.
8. *You and I,* by Philip Barry.
9. *Huckleberry Finn,* by Mark Twain.
10. *The Oval Portrait,* by Edgar Allan Poe.

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Down-to-Earth Air Talk

AIRPOWER. By Al Williams. New York: Coward-McCann, Inc. 1940. 433 *pp.* $3.50.

FIGHTING PLANES OF THE WORLD. By Bernard A. Law. Illustrations by Barry Bart. New York: Random House. 1940. 66 *pp.* $1.

Reviewed by HANSON W. BALDWIN

AL WILLIAMS has long been known as one of the nation's more vocal fliers. He adds to that reputation in these books.

Formerly a speed flier and pilot of rare ability in the navy, more recently a Major in the Marine Corps Reserve, the author of "Airpower" is a familiar figure in the skies of America. His technical knowledge, sincerity, and moral and physical courage are his outstanding attributes, but his public expressions—as reprinted by his newspaper columns at least—are not noted for balanced judgment or calm analysis. His writings, rarely brilliant and sometimes bitter with frustration, tinged with hysteria or colored with bias, nevertheless have been productive of much good. For his barbed charges, his continuous jousting with complacency and what he calls the "barnacled" ideas of our fighting services have helped to mould a public opinion insistent upon adequate air power, a public opinion that was undoubtedly needed to force much-needed reforms. The dead hand of tradition has undoubtedly held tight the reins of progress in the air, but Al Williams unfortunately is not the best possible exponent of air power; he overstates his case; he is frankly a partisan with a grievance.

All of these faults will be found in this book. "Airpower" cannot therefore be a "good" book, in the sense that one might hope to find in it a careful description of what airpower is, what it has accomplished, and what its potentialities are. On the other hand the shining, in fact pugnacious, sincerity of the author—a kind of crusading fervor peculiar to so many airmen, is evident on every page.

The book is a result of Al Williams's personal tours of observation in the aircraft world of Europe, and as must be expected in a book based upon columns and the stuff of columns it is repetitious, contradictory, discursive, sometimes egoistic, sometimes inaccurate, too often compact of opinions, too seldom based upon well-documented fact. "Airpower" is nevertheless always interesting, naturally provocative, sometimes informing and therefore stimulating reading.

After an introductory chapter on the historical background of aviation which tells, as the author sees it, of the world's struggle to develop its wings the author's observations on his first inspection trip of the European aviation world in 1936 are recorded. A second part of the book deals with his trip of 1938, and a third part brings history—or rather Williams's interpretation of history—up to date, with two concluding chapters on "The Low Countries and the Fall of France," and "America and the Future."

Running like a dirge throughout the book is Williams's contention that airpower has sounded the death knell of sea power, a contention which, put in Williams's extreme form, is difficult for more dispassionate observers to stomach. The book's concluding sentence might also be described as its theme:

"The lists of death are open—the dread signal for the world's first full-out air war is near—and airpower, the warrior knight of continents—flies forth — swiftly — to an all-time conquest of seapower."

He concedes "a most definite place in our defense system for seapower—but not as our first line of defense" (and in this, time may eventually prove him right); he endorses, without discussion and with no recommendations as to the administrative form it should take, a new department of national defense for airpower. But anachronistically enough, and with far greater self-control, insight, and accuracy than he displays elsewhere in his interpretations, on page 388 he states "no single arm can win a war—a modern war—single-handed." The book creates the opposite impression, and that is its weakness.

On the other hand, there is much interesting and valuable information, and a wealth of anecdotal and descriptive material, much of it dealing with the great and near-great in the air world of Europe. Al Williams's opinions on planes, engines, armament are lucid and well worth study. This reviewer agrees with this experienced technician that there has been far too much wishful thinking, too much hysteria in this country. He condemns "the meddling, vacillating, interventionist leadership which, posing as international statesmanship, writes and talks us into this blood letting," and declares "had we been blessed with American leadership, we could have viewed the European War with compassion and sadness, but with a sense of security that should be ours."

Al Williams contributes a foreword —in somewhat restrained Williams style—to another book on air power—Bernard Law's "Fighting Planes of the World." This slim little book, well illustrated in "color compositions" by Barry Bart, describes briefly and aptly the principal military types of the world. It is a valuable handbook in the world of today when the influence of air power upon history is inscribed in the daily headlines.

Hanson W. Baldwin is on the staff of the New York Times.

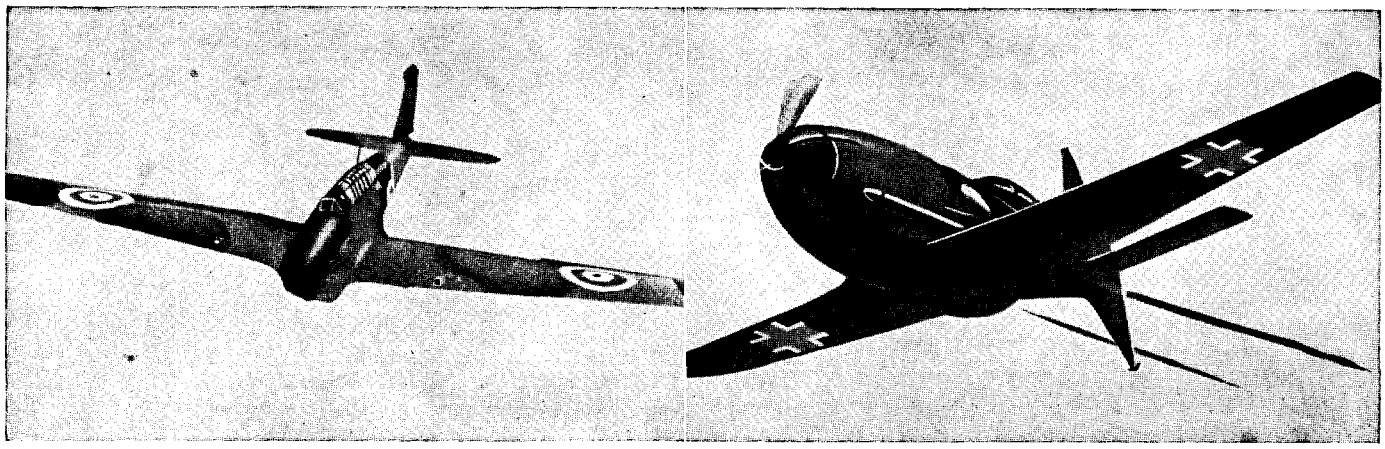

Illustration by Barry Bart from "Fighting Planes of the World."

Great Britain's "Fairey Battle"

Germany's "Messerschmidt 109"

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Trelawny and Byron

MARGARET ARMSTRONG

ON Monday the 5th of January, 1824, Byron landed at Missolonghi, dressed in a scarlet uniform borrowed from an obliging colonel, and was greeted with "salvos of artillery, the discharge of guns and the wild yells of the populace. The occasion was stupendous." Everyone agreed that Byron appeared to be in excellent health and spirits. "Hope and content were pictured on his countenance," Pierino noted with satisfaction; but added —still slightly hysterical, no doubt, after his escape from those horrid Turks: "I cannot easily express the emotion which the scene excited. I could scarcely restrain my tears."

Byron thus safely settled in Missolonghi, Stanhope felt he could leave him for a while and departed for Athens. The news of his arrival there, and also the more exciting news of Byron's arrival in Missolonghi, reached Trelawny while he was still happily engaged in "deer-stalking" with Odysseus. Realizing its importance, he told the chief he should see Stanhope before the latter became too intimate with any of the other leaders, and they must return to Athens at once. They did so. Stanhope seems to have found both to his liking. He became Trelawny's friend. Of the chieftain, he wrote later on to Byron: "I have been constantly with Odysseus. He has a very strong mind, a good heart, and is as brave as his sword. He is a doing man; he governs with a strong arm, and is the only man in Greece who can preserve order."

Odysseus may not have felt the same enthusiasm for a "typographical colonel," but he had the good sense to affect interest in Stanhope's theories, and agree that whatever money could be coaxed from the London Committee and the Quakers would be well spent on Bibles, newspapers, medical supplies, useful pamphlets, and the salaries of two schoolmasters trained in the Lancastrian system. But another plan of Stanhope's met with much sincerer approval; Stanhope, realizing that no improvements could thrive in a country ravaged by civil war, suggested a conference. Get the rival leaders face to face around a table to talk things over in a friendly spirit, and harmony would result in no time at all. Mavrocordato and his followers

Edward Trelawny

must be invited to represent western Greece; Colocotronis might be induced to come from the Morea; Odysseus would bring the chiefs of eastern Greece. Odysseus agreed; he thought Salona, near his headquarters on Parnassus, would be a convenient meeting place. This decided, the name of another guest came up—Byron! Byron's presence at the conference was essential to success: a large loan had been floated in London, and Byron and Stanhope held the purse strings. But would he come? Stanhope, recalling the mud and filth of Missolonghi, was hopeful. So was Trelawny. Parnassus! Why, the name in itself was a magnet to draw Byron away from his poisonous swamps up to the high clear air of Parnassus, home of Apollo and the Muses. Of course Byron would come! In March letters went to Byron from both Stanhope and Trelawny, explaining the importance of the congress. Stanhope wrote imploring Byron and Mavrocordato to attend, "as you love Greece and her sacred cause"; Trelawny, with the same urgency, and at great length. He ended: "I rejoin the army with Ulysses [Odysseus] today. Corinth and Negroponto are in close blockade. Ulysses defends the Pass of Thermophilly [*sic*] with 3000. He is the most energetic, active and enterprising soldier I have ever met."

Byron's answer was favorable. But he had had another attack of epilepsy; the turmoil and quarrelling among the chiefs, the shocking discomfort of his life, gave no room for any consideration beyond the anxieties of the moment. Weeks went by. He stayed on in Missolonghi. Trelawny came to a decision: he would fetch Byron himself.

So one April morning of 1824 a gallant company set out from Athens with Trelawny at its head. Behind him came a string of husky young bandits on good horses, and a couple of pack mules. They made their way westward —cautiously, for fear of enemies, Turks or Greeks—winding in single file up and up through high mountain passes, down rocky defiles, along the beds of ice-cold brooks; all of them, from the smallest donkey boy to Trelawny himself, in the best of spirits. He had not felt such exhilaration since boyhood. Nor such entire confidence in the future. He was in charge of an important mission and sure of success. The War of Independence had taken a turn for the better; no more "deer-stalking." After the congress at Salona everything would be different. Greece would be united, become at last the Hellas of Shelley's dreams, and assume her place among the nations—as a democracy, of course. God forbid that Greece should ever submit to a king! But whatever form it took, the new government would give Byron a high place because of his name and his money, and Stanhope was in line for some very important position. Odysseus would be made commander-in-chief of a large, well organized, well disciplined army. As for himself—time enough to think of that. All three of them—Byron, Stanhope, Odysseus—were his friends: they would see that he got a post where he could make use of the energy he felt seething within him, energy hitherto wasted on purposeless adventure. Now adventure had an aim. He was moving towards a goal, a glorious goal. Riding with his Rumeliots through the mountains in the April weather—cool air, bright sun, his young robbers singing as they rode —Trelawny felt that life was worth living. Life was good—and would soon be better.

They had reached the river Evvenus and were starting to ford it; the horses stepped reluctantly into the angry stream, splashing, stumbling, feeling for a foothold among the stones—and stopped. A horse and rider came hurrying down the opposite bank, a messenger from Missolonghi to Salona. Disordered, riding fast, out of breath—obviously a bearer of bad tidings. He

*TRELAWNY, by Margaret Armstrong. To be published by The Macmillan Co.

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halted only long enough to fling Trelawny his news, to shout, "Byron is dead!" and disappeared at a gallop.

Byron dead! Trelawny looked after the man in incredulous dismay, hoping against hope that it was a mistake. But other men from Missolonghi came straggling by. He called to them. It was true—Byron was dead. That was all they knew. It was enough. As he wrote later, "By a stroke of fate, all my hopes of being of use in Greece were extinguished." They reached Missolonghi next day. Byron had been dead for nearly a week. He had died on the 19th of April, 1824.

"With despondent thoughts," Trelawny wrote, "I entered the town. It is situated on the verge of the most dismal swamp I ever saw. I marvelled that Byron, so prone to fevers, should have been induced to land on this mud-bank and stick there for three months shut in by a circle of stagnant pools, a 'belt of death.' . . . I waded through the streets, between wind and water, to the house he had lived in; it was detached and on the margin of the shallow slimy sea-waters. For three months this house had been besieged, day and night, like a bank that has a run upon it. Now that death had closed the door, it was as silent as a cemetery. No one was within but Fletcher, of which I was glad. As if he knew my wishes, he led me up a narrow stair into a small room, with nothing in it but a coffin standing on trestles. No word was spoken by either of us; he withdrew the black pall and the white shroud, and there lay the embalmed body of the Pilgrim—more beautiful in death than in life. . . . Few marble busts could have matched its stainless white, the harmony of its proportions and perfect finish; yet he had been dissatisfied with that body, and longed to cast its slough. How often I had heard him curse it!"

Fletcher, realizing the trend of Trelawyn's thoughts, sighed and drew the shroud higher over the body, murmuring: "That was the cause of all my lord's misfortunes."

Trelawny nodded, and, as he stood there looking down at the man for whom he had felt such a strange mingling of awe, admiration, and contempt, pity wiped out contempt; for Byron's fear that the doctors would "maul" him about was justified. They had done it—five of them, and very thoroughly. An autopsy had been performed—the brain opened, the intestines removed; the feet that had given Byron such agony of body and mind, handled and examined. What had they found to be the cause of the deformity? The tendon Achilles too tightly drawn? He sent Fletcher for a glass of water, then folded the shroud farther down. Yes; it was as he had thought. The legs were shrunk-

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en; the feet he had so often seen, of which Byron had so often complained, were both twisted to one side by the tendon. The right was the worse—the toes could not touch the ground; that accounted for Byron's odd tiptoeing gait, his inability to mount a horse without help.

"Poor fellow!" Trelawny sighed, and Fletcher, coming back, heard him.

"You may well say so, sir," Fletcher groaned. "These savages have robbed my Lord of all his money, and his life, too," and with trembling hands he replaced the shroud.

Trelawny turned away and went into the next room, where Byron had died, still in great confusion. Papers were scattered about on the desk and on the floor—a half-finished letter to Byron's sister Augusta Leigh, a drawing of his little daughter Ada, a woman's handkerchief, a ringlet, a ribbon, a small glove. Trelawny gathered these relics together and put them carefully aside. He found the verses Byron had written on his thirty-sixth birthday, such a short time ago, and read two of them:

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldiers grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy Rest."

Next day, he and Gamba went through Byron's effects—destroying what was worthless, collecting his notebooks and fragments of poetry, assorting and docketing the papers—and arranged for the disposition of the body. (Trelawny, recalling Byron's wish, favored Athens; but, in the end, it was decided to send the body to England.) That same evening a long letter went off to Stanhope, giving a detailed account of Byron's illness, and expressed in the slightly pompous language that Stanhope would expect and approve at such a time. "With all his faults," Trelawny wrote, "I loved him truly; he is connected with every event of the most interesting years of my life. . . . I shall ever regret I was not with him when he gave up his mortality. . . . The world has lost its greatest man, I my best friend."

But a few hours later he wrote to Stanhope in a different vein. He had come to realize the persecution Byron had suffered from the rival factions, to see Mavrocordato without the mask he had worn in Hydra, and recognize this "wily Phanariot" as a formidable rival of Odysseus to be distrusted and feared. "The pestilential fever of these torpid waters," he wrote, "seems to have affected everything. The atmosphere is as dense as November in London, and it is infected by reptiles—everything is transacted, not under the rose but under the mud; imbecile councils, intriguing people, greedy soldiers and factious captains, are the beings I have to deal with. . . . There have been meetings and orations enough to settle all the affairs of Greece, if talking would do it. . . . I have so clearly pointed out to Mavrocordato the advantage of his attending the Congress in person, and through your good offices to effect a reconciliation with Odysseus, that he has pledged himself to accompany me to Salona. . . . The English artificers here and the brigade now wish to join Odysseus, or, at least, leave this hole. I know you will say I have seduced them. I like the brigade corps. . . . Letters from Zante inform us of the arrival there of Mr. Blaquiere, in the ship Florida. He has brought out in specie four hundred thousand pounds sterling consigned to the house of Barff. . . . I think Byron's name was the great means of getting the loan. . . . They talk here openly of a king; Mavrocordato says that all the primates of the Morea are for it."

Notwithstanding his increasing distrust of the chiefs, Trelawny could still think of Byron as a friend, for pity still held him; and as he pieced together the varying accounts of Byron's illness pity became remorse. If he had come sooner—persuaded Byron to leave this "belt of death"—Byron would have been alive now! Interviews with the two doctors—Bruno and Millingen—who had been with Byron at the end, increased his dismay. Bruno stammered out a story of shocking incompetence and blamed Millingen. Millingen was ill; Trelawny went to see him. He found him "a delicately complexioned, rosy-cheeked, dandy boy; of simpering and affected manners," and understood why Mavrocordato spoke of him as *mio caro ragazzino*. But the little fellow was ill, "whining and crying like a sick girl," convinced he was at the point of death, afraid of being robbed; thanking Trelawny for coming, begging not to be left alone. Trelawny concealed his dislike and reassured him; told him no one ever died of malaria, promised to come again, and left him.

But Trelawny was in a rage now. Furious with the two conceited puppies whose ignorance had killed Byron. Furious with Byron for letting himself be killed. It was all Byron's fault! He had hired Bruno because Bruno "came cheap"; he had stayed on here in this pestilential spot because he was too lazy to move. Miserliness and sloth had brought the poor fool to his death, and he, Trelawny, was to suffer for it!

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Union Now...

THE FAMILY. By Nina Fedorova. Boston: Little Brown & Co. (An Atlantic Monthly Press Book). 1940. 346 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by AMY LOVEMAN

AMONG the gifts the gods provide novelists perhaps the least usual and certainly not the least valuable is freshness—that indefinable something by virtue of which the commonplace becomes the absorbing and the routine of living takes on color and vivacity. It is of all qualities the most intangible like that uniqueness of personality which in the fortunate individual invests him with charm like a lovely fragrance. Mrs. Fedorova's book has freshness, more freshness than I for one have found in any novel since "The Constant Nymph," and it succeeds in making the small incident of daily existence of vivid import and the persons who live it as real, as vital, of as much concern to the reader as though they were an intimate and essential part of his own life.

Yet there is little action to the book. It merely portrays—but portrays them so you know them in the very habit of their appearance, speech, and character—a family of exiles who in 1937 were ekeing out an existence on the margin of want by running a boarding house in the British Concession in Tientsin. The Family "was Russian-ex-big, ex-great, ex-prosperous," and consisted of Granny whose still cherished aristocratic propensities in no way impeded her wise tolerance and understanding charity. Mother, who was the very pivot of the home and household, a daughter, and two nephews. Around them, finding shelter under their roof, gathered a queer group which numbered among its members a shabby genteel woman who had once been a fortune teller, a Russian idealist whose dreams got in the way of his reason, a Chinese professor, five Japanese gentlemen of dubious purpose, and an Englishwoman of good family with a failing for the bottle. Weaving in and out of the circle were others, a Jewish doctor and his wife, refugees from the fury of Hitler; a romantic Englishwoman pursuing across the globe a long-vanished lover; an American boy who wins the love of the daughter of the Family, servants, police officials, travellers from abroad. They are all subtly delineated and sharply differentiated, and their problems, their woes, their simple pleasures, their conversation, which flows with such naturalness and liveliness, become of immense and immediate interest.

Nina Fedorova's "The Family" has something of that Russian quality which we catch in such a play as "The Lower Depths," of that unquenchable zest which wrings gaiety out of misery, and it has, too, a valiant acceptance of misfortune which dignifies and softens privation. Here, one feels, are men and women, deprived of the external paraphernalia of gracious living, carrying on with serenity, true aristocrats of the spirit. I am sorry that Mrs. Fedorova felt it necessary to append an Epilogue to her novel in which she states what has been implicit all through her story, that the Family epitomizes that greater family which is the world of nations and which, torn and suffering as it is, can only be healed by the good offices of all its members. It is, I think, an artistic blot on a book which stands out as wrought with unusual skill, and which even without it enforced a moral. However, it is but a minor fault in an excellent novel.

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Novelizing Charles Lamb

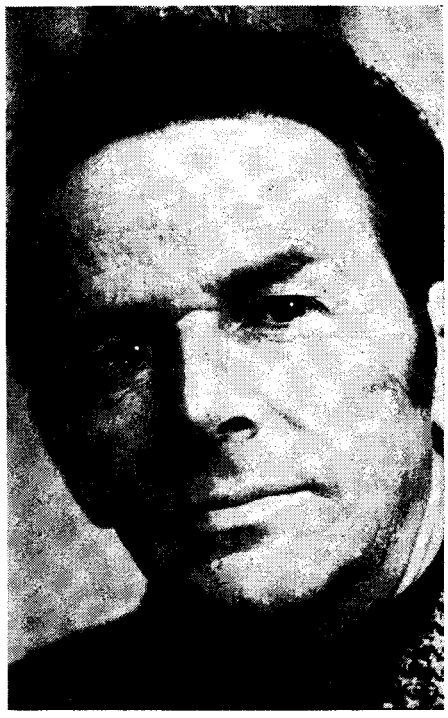
SO PERISH THE ROSES. By Neil Bell. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1940. 512 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by RICHARD A. CORDELL

THIS popular author of realistic family sagas, macabre horror stories, and adventure fantasies has composed a labor of love, a novelized biography of Charles Lamb. In a candid and disarming preface Neil Bell admits an affection for Lamb and his writings hardly this side of idolatry. For forty years Lamb has been his favorite author, and gradually emerged what seemed to him the real Charles Lamb with his pipe, his friends, his liquor, his loves, his superb amateur scholarship, his onerous toil as an accountant, his distressing domestic life. The novelist discovered that Lamb was not the "gentle Elia," "the gentle-hearted Charles" of Coleridge, "an emasculated, whimsical ineffectual angel, a strange inhuman being to whom literature was everything and life little, love nothing." "So Perish the Roses" is an attempt to recreate a flesh-and-blood human being and dissipate the spurious legend that has scarified the East India House clerk. Somerset Maugham has confessed that critics have written so insipidly about Lamb's overflowing heart and charm that he can never read him without uneasiness—his emotion "too often suggests the facile lachrymosity of the alcoholic."

Although a novelized biography rarely satisfies either as a novel or as a biography, "So Perish the Roses" does succeed in creating a convincing picture of a man, rather than of a littérateur, a man "who lived life so fully and so passionately that at fifty-nine he was burnt-out physically and mentally." Readers familiar with Lamb's Letters and with Lucas's "Life" will wonder at—and delight in—the scanty use of imagination in the novel. Even the most trivial incidents are factual. Whether entirely accurate or not, the portraiture is more credible than in the biographies, for in this matter the novelist has the advantage over the historian. Coleridge, one of the incomprehensibles of literary history, emerges as a human being; Leigh Hunt, the Mencken of his day, the pugnacious young John Keats, priggish Moxon, Hazlitt, Charles Lloyd, Wordsworth, Crabb Robinson—all Lamb's famed associates are here. Perhaps the author is a bit unfair to Lamb's family. Mrs. Lamb is such a whimpering and selfish hypochondriac that her murder strikes us as justifiable homicide, and brother John's caddishness seems somewhat overdone. Mary is in the novel just what she is in the Letters and the biographies—plain, dumpy, kindly, intelligent, and humorous in her sane intervals.

The author tries so hard to present his hero objectively that he perhaps makes Lamb too rude and sottish.



Walker Weaver

Neil Bell

Certainly he is no more gentle and sweet than a hard-headed Scotsman named Barrie was whimsical. Perhaps, too, the novelist embellishes Lamb's four love affairs for purposes of romance, for one suspects that Lamb, like Irving, was not really a marrying man. After each of his various disappointments he bounced back quickly into his not unpleasant bachelor habits. On the other hand, Mary's insane attack on her mother is told briefly and simply, and Lamb's release, on pension, from the India House is far less dramatic in the novel than in the essayist's own account in "The Superannuated Man."

Novel readers unfamiliar with Lamb and his eccentric associates will find the novel too long, for the author treasured his material too dearly to select sparingly. Other readers may be encouraged to pick up the letters again, or the essays, to renew acquaintance with Charles and Mary, two fine people who inspired deep love and confidence among many friends.

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 338)

WITHER:

THE AUTHOR'S RESOLUTION

Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair?
Or make pale my cheeks with care
'Cause another's rosy are?
Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flow'ry meads in May,
If she think not well of me
What care I how fair she be!

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THE NEGRO AND AMERICAN CULTURE

(*Continued from page 4*)

Or turn from such a tragic love theme to one of more erotic import, Countee Cullen's unforgettably beautiful poem, "To a Brown Boy":

That brown girl's swagger gives a twitch
To beauty like a queen;
Lad, never dam your body's itch
When loveliness is seen.

For there is ample room for bliss
In pride in clean, brown limbs,
And lips know better how to kiss
Than how to raise white hymns.

And when your body's death gives birth
To soil for spring to crown,
Men will not ask if that rare earth
Was white flesh once, or brown.

What has happened is that Negro poets refuse any longer to believe, as Booker T. Washington had urged, that the Negro should emulate the white man in order to attain success. They can no longer stomach Paul Dunbar's cry that the Negro is "so noble in forgiving"; they are not interested in forgiving or forgetting, but in changing, improving, reforming, revolutionizing.

Hughes's insistence is that the Negro, too, is America, and that the time has come when the white man must free him from the fascist, or quasi-fascist suppression, under which he has actually lived for centuries in this country.

FEW people realize that there are more Negroes in the United States than there are Irish in Ireland or Jews in the entire world; what is more pertinent, if not more astonishing, is that the Negro represents one-tenth of the total population of the nation—which is a greater minority than that of any other people.

The contributions of the Negro to American culture are as indigenous to our soil as the lengendary cowboy or gold-seeking frontiersman. In fact, they constitute America's chief claim to originality in its cultural history. In song, the Negro spirituals and to a less extent the Blues; in tradition, Negro folk-lore; and in music, Negro jazz—these three constitute the Negro contribution to American culture. When Dvorak sought to find an inspiration in American environment for his New World Symphony, he inevitably turned to the Negro. After all, the Negro, in his simple, unsophisticated way, has developed out of the American milieu a form of expression, a modo, a literary *genre,* a folk-tradition, that are distinctly and undeniably American. The white man in America has continued a culture of European origin. In respect of originality, then, the Negro is perhaps more important in the growth of an American culture than the white man. His art is richer, more spontaneous, and more captivating and convincing in its appeal.

The very fact that the Negro, by the nature of his environment, was deprived of education, prevented his art from ever becoming purely imitative. Even where he adopted the white man's substance, as in the case of religion, he never adopted his forms. He gave to whatever he took a new style and a new interpretation. In truth, he made it practically into a new thing. He could express his soul without concern for grammar or the eye of the carping critic. As a result, his art is, as is all art that springs from the people, an artless art, and in that sense is the most genuine art of the world. While the white man has gone to Europe for his models, and is seeking still a European approval of his artistic endeavors, the Negro in his art forms has never gone beyond America for his background and has never sought the acclaim of any culture other than his own. This is particularly true of those forms of Negro art that come directly from the people.

It is in the Spirituals, the Blues, and the Labor Songs that the Negroes have been most successful in their folk-music. There is more, far more,

Two New Books every reader of The Saturday Review will want!

THOMAS **Wolfe's** LAST NOVEL

If he had never written another line, this novel would bring him immortality.

You Can't Go Home Again

At the time of his death, Wolfe left two entirely completed manuscripts. The first, *The Web and the Rock,* was published last year. The second, his final novel, is the story of a lost modern who found himself. Fully mature, thoroughly integrated, it discloses the full stature of Wolfe as one of the most important American novelists of the 20th Century. 743 Pages. $3.00

JAMES **Thurber's**

Not for children— if you can keep it away from them!

Fables for Our Time

The man who invented bloodhounds is on the rampage again, with a score or more lessons in prose, dedicated to sinners and proving—anything you like. The fables are imperishably illustrated and are followed by Thurber's pictorial interpretations of famous poems which bring out salient points the poets never dreamed of. *Illustrated by the author.* $2.50

HARPER & BROTHERS

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than the ordinary Christian zeal embodied in the Negro Spirituals. They are not mere religious hymns written or recited to sweeten the service or improve the ritual. They are the aching, poignant cry of an entire people, and no better examples are to be found than in "Go Down Moses," "Crucifixion," or "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." In the Blues and the Labor Songs, the economic connection is more obvious. Here we have folklore in poetic form, springing spontaneously from the simple everyday life of an oppressed people. The Blues have a primitive kinship with the old ballads that is strikingly curious upon close comparison. While the rhyme-scheme employed in the Blues is often less clever and arresting than that found in the ballads, the incremental repetitions are not less effective, and the simple, quick descriptions are often as fine in this form as the other. The Labor Songs, growing up as part of the workaday rhythms of daily toil, have a swing about them that is irresistibly infectious. The musical swing of the hammer, its sweeping rise and fall, is communicated, for instance, with rhythmic power in the song entitled, "John Henry."

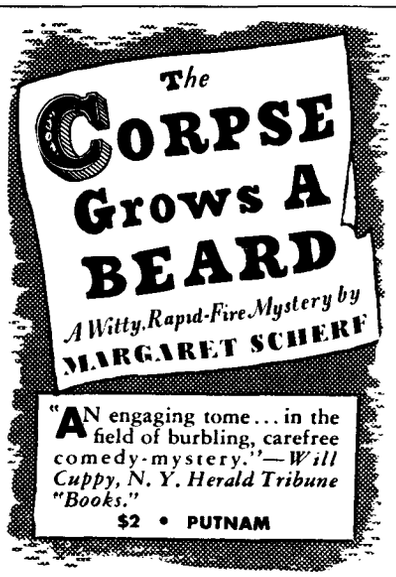
Dis is de hammer,
Killed John Henry,
Killed him dead, killed him dead,
Busted de brains all outer my pardner
In his head, yes, in his head.

In jazz, of course, the Negro has provided the most original, ingenious, and arousing music of the last two decades—music that has swept two continents and brought more good will than a dozen Lindbergh flights or diplomatic missions. Stokowski declared that the Negro had "effected a profound change in musical outlook." Jazz reflects something of the essential irresponsibility, or rather the irresponsible enthusiasms and ecstasies, that underlie Negro life here in America, and which give to Negro art such singular distinction in verve and spontaneity. While jazz in its inferior forms is a vulgar removal from the idea of the exquisite which prevailed in music before our day, it nevertheless has the virtue of great originality and the vigor of deep challenge. In a very significant sense, indeed, it remains the only original contribution to music that has been made by America.

Curiously enough, Negroes have pathetically brief existences as authors. They write a few good poems, publish several volumes of promising verse, write a novel or maybe two or three, contrive ingenious short stories, dash off brilliant sketches and pen-portraits, and then they are finished. What, for example, has Walter White written of literary significance in recent years, or Countee Cullen, Eric Walrond, Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, Georgia Johnson, Fenton Johnson, Lewis Alexander, Frank Horne, Gwendolyn Bennett, W. E. B. Du Bois, or even Langston Hughes? Hughes, it must be admitted, has not been idle, but his work has not grown in importance. Rather it has stood still. Newer figures have arisen, however, and it is to be hoped that they will reveal greater staying power and growth. Most conspicuous among these are Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston, and M. B. Tolson. What these writers have done, has been to take the lower type Negro and give body, form, and interpretation to his life. No one has done that so successfully as Richard Wright, who in his short stories "Uncle Tom's Children" and in his novel "Native Son" has written the best fiction of any Negro writer in the United States.

In Zora Neale Hurston's latest novel, "Their Eyes Are Watching God," the character of Teacake is an exceptionally effective portrayal of a type of Negro that has never been captured in fiction before. In M. B. Tolson's "Harlem Gallery," which is an urbanized Negro "Spoon River Anthology," still other and even more various types come to life in a most direct and intimate fashion. Tolson promises to be one of the richest talents produced by Negro literature in America.

All these writers are part of the challenge of a *newer* Negro literature. They are not the pampered products of exotic-loving publishers or literati: they are real stuff, and out of them it is to be hoped not only lasting Negro literature, but lasting literature, will be born.



The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, and Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
DEATH OF A LUCKY LADY *Virginia Rath* (Crime Club: $2.)	Sprightly but penurious San Francisco widow makes auriferous discovery that leads to double murder, and glory for Michael Dundas.	Dope on old gold interesting, if not new, and canny sleuth explores other dangerous and labyrinthine channels before gun-duel finish.	High assay
RENDEZVOUS WITH THE PAST *Kathleen Moore Knight* (Crime Club: $2.)	Step-daughter and ex-husband accused of shooting rascally step-father on Conn. lake. Lady press agent is principal sleuth.	Presenting most venomous family in recent months, including murderous twins. Sleuthing nothing extra, but yarn moves at dive-bomber speed.	Admirable
THE BALCONY *Dorothy Cameron Disney* (Random House: $2.)	Grand-niece innocently involved in doubly murderous doings at decaying Maryland mansion. Disarmingly pleasant sheriff forces killer to unmask.	Inimical ancients, young love—a bit too sudden like—hidden treasure, good detecting, capital characterizations, and unceasing suspense.	Required reading
GUILTY *Lee Thayer* (Dodd, Mead: $2.)	Peter Clancy, in Hollywood, satisfactorily solves puzzling problem in ballistics and wrings confession from slayer of megacycle maestro's missus.	Plot well worked out and red herrings adequately scattered but some of the chatter is just too cute for words.	Average
THE SUMMER CAMP MYSTERY *Nicholas Blake* (Harper's: $2.)	Gaiety of British seaside camp disturbed by nasty pranks of "Mad Hutter." Nigel Strangeways reveals prankster's identity—also finds corpse.	Strangeway's highly intelligent sleuthing well displayed in hard-to-solve yarn of middle class Britishers on vacation.	Odd

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NUGGETS AND THE NATION

(*Continued from page 7*)

off the books our rapidly mounting national debt. This of course would result in inflation, with its well-known drastic effects, and according to Mr. Scherman would ultimately lead to the establishment in this country of a totalitarian regime. In order to prevent this he wants us to return to the gold standard once again to allow the private hoarding of gold. "Gold hoarders serve a social purpose of the most vital character. They are the one group in the society who constitute that automatic brake on reckless governing which in a free country may possibly save the whole people from the disaster which governmental bankruptcy brings."

Mr. Scherman devotes some attention to the necessity of making "our Federal Government's income balance its expenditures." He knows that the only way this can be accomplished is for millions to pay a great deal more in taxes and for other millions (30,000,000) to do without the government support they have become accustomed to. He asks us to make sure that those who are entrusted with public office will surmount the educational and political difficulties incident to balancing the budget. He admits that such action will put an end to the political careers of those men entrusted with the task. Does Mr. Scherman believe that this is a wise time to create internal dissention, no matter how wise such action may be economically?

"Government monopoly of gold ownership lies at the root of totalitarianism; it is one power without which it cannot possibly flourish." On this assumption it is easy to arrive at the conclusion that it is our most urgent duty to remove the monopoly of gold ownership. But once we accomplish this, will all our problems be automatically solved? Will totalitarianism be avoided by this means alone? The notion that the gold standard behaves as an automatic regulator is an attractive one, but if it did not act as such in the period before 1933 is there any reason to believe it will act that way now?

The crux of the entire matter is that Mr. Scherman believes that the threat lies in our domestic situation. The real causes of the gold trouble, as Mr. Peter Drucker has pointed out, lie outside this country. The gold standard operates efficiently only when it is international in nature, when it acts as an organizer of trade and a regulator of international capital movements. Suppose we do repeal the "Gold Prohibition Act." This will prevent profit from gold devaluation from being used to retire our debt. But there are other means equally unsound, which the government, if it desires, may use for the same purpose.

"The Real Danger in Our Gold" throws much needed light on economic problems which have been too long a mystery to the "ordinary citizen." But Mr. Scherman has gone too far in simplifying the picture. The prevention of totalitarianism in the United States cannot be accomplished merely by the means he suggests.

Richard T. Ely, president of the Institute for Economic Research, is the author of "Outlines of Economics," "Foundations of National Prosperity," and "Hard Times—The Way In and the Way Out."

School Library Conference
October 18-19, 1940

There will be a free discussion of school library problems and activities under the sponsorship of the Secondary Board at The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, N. J. Beginning at 3 P. M. on Friday, October 18, the discussion will continue until about 3 P. M., the following day.

The Conference will be guests of the School at dinner on Friday evening, when Mr. Frederic G. Melcher will speak, and at luncheon on Saturday. Other details of the program will be announced later.

All interested are invited to attend and to make suggestions, inquiries, and hotel reservations promptly through Oscar H. McPherson, Lawrenceville, N. J.

M. & M. Warfare

THE ART OF MODERN WARFARE. By Col. Hermann Foertsch. Translated by Theodore W. Knauth. New York: Veritas Press, Inc. 1940. 273 *pp.* $2.75.

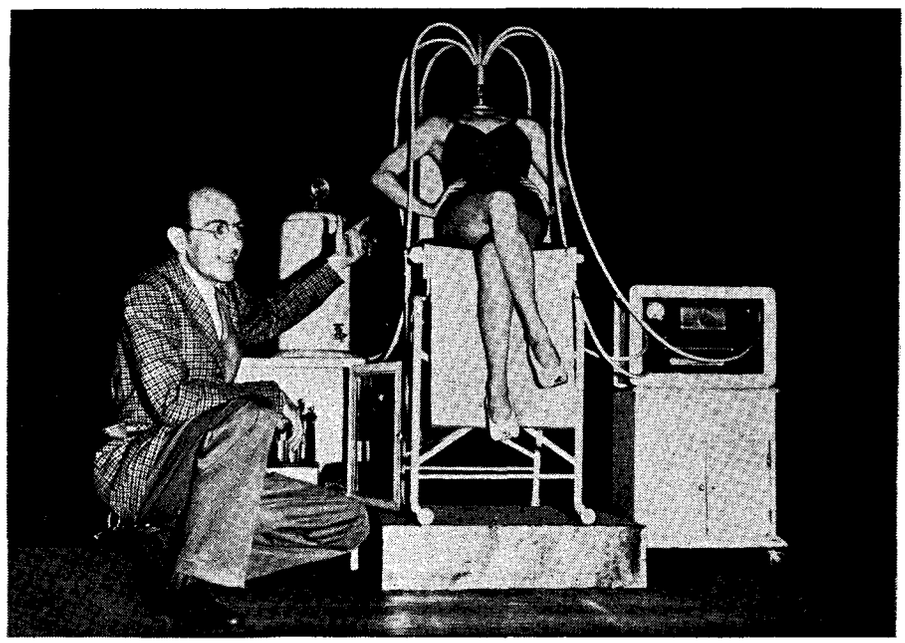
Reviewed by R. ERNEST DUPUY

> In this era of motorization and mechanization, quick, determined action will frequently be the precursor of victory. It calls for better training, but it also includes many possibilities of success . . . the best weapons for pursuit today are those that combine fire effect and mobility.

THUS writes today a German General Staff officer. A prostrate Continent furnishes the "Q. E. D." to his theorum. But a century ago Dennis Hart Mahan, Professor of Military Engineering and of the Art of War at the United States Military Academy, was thundering to West Point cadets similar doctrines. "No great success can be hoped for in war," wrote Mahan, "in which rapid movements do not enter as an element . . ." He stressed the necessity for "movable columns" careering across country to produce panic and havoc.

The tempo of Mahan was that of man and beast; that of Foertsch is the machine. There alone lies the difference. Both expound the principles of war as applied by the great captains of the past. Both advocate the lightning stroke—*Blitzkrieg*. Vastly different is such reasoning from the artificial polemics of a Liddell Hart.

Coördination of national effort in war is the keynote of this very readable book. It is a coördination stem-



THE HEADLESS LADY by Clayton Rawson. Step right up ladies 'n' gents and enjoy a weird and wonderful baffler bristling with strange characters and curious circus lore. "Swell reading," says *The Saturday Review's* Criminal Record of this latest Merlini Mystery by the author of *Death from a Top Hat,* etc. *Illustrated,* $2.00. **PUTNAM**

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ming in the beginning from alliance of military and political high command and is carried down to include the team-work of all arms on the battlefield. Interesting to those unfamiliar with the theory and practice of German military training today is the author's reiterated emphasis upon the need for initiative in leadership to grasp success at the crucial moment. Incidentally, one cannot help wondering if Mahan the father may not have furnished to Germany's army something of the spark that Mahan the son—apostle of sea power—is believed to have furnished the German navy.

Americans, civilians and soldiers alike, will gain much by a careful perusal of "The Art of Modern Warfare."

IRMGARD LITTEN

PIERRE VAN PAASSEN ACCLAIMS NEW BOOK

In introducing "Beyond Tears," Mrs. Litten's inside story of how she fought the Gestapo to save her son, Pierre van Paassen, noted foreign correspondent and author of "Days of Our Years," says: "That the son was an exceptional personality is merely incidental. That the mother, the author of this volume, is an extraordinary human being, is, in the final analysis, unimportant. But that both of them fought undauntedly for decency and integrity in a country where intellectual honesty is a crime punishable by torture and death—*that is of great consequence.*"

Long Awaited Story

Mr. van Paassen further says of "Beyond Tears": "Hans Litten personified the final struggle of democracy in Germany. Today, when the forces that destroyed Litten threaten to overrun the last rampart of democracy, it is but right that the martyrdom of Irmgard Litten's son serve as a warning to the free men of this country."

"Beyond Tears" bears the dedication of the Archbishop of York and is also being widely recommended by the Book-of-the-Month Club. Ask for a copy today. $2.75

AN ALLIANCE BOOK

The Late Carl Akeley

THE WILDERNESS LIVES AGAIN. By Mary L. Jobe Akeley. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. 1940. 411 *pp.* $3.

Reviewed by LOUIS J. HALLE, JR.

NO one is so incautious as to attribute unqualified genius to a man dead less than a generation. But it is quite safe to say, as Mr. Trubee Davidson does in his foreword to this biography, that the late Carl Akeley "had a real touch of genius." The "touch" lay not so much in his infinite capacity for taking pains as in the fact that he was, all his life, an inspired man. He lived with a vision that mastered him, gave purpose to his life, endowed him with a personal destiny that overcame poverty, hardship, and the demands of the flesh. Surely this is at least one of the diagnostic marks. For others one may look to Akeley's achievements, as embodied today in the great habitat-groups of the American Museum in New York and the Field Museum in Chicago. Artist, scientist, inventor, explorer, he accomplished in one strenuous and passionate lifetime what most good men could hardly accomplish in half-a-dozen.

Modern surgery had its origin in the barber-shop. In like fashion, the art form which Akeley conceived and realized stemmed from the shoddy craft of taxidermy as it was practiced sixty years ago. While still a farm boy of sixteen, he had already envisioned the possibilities of this new form, possibilities of capturing the wilderness and investing it with the heightened reality that gives to art its single advantage over nature. Instead of stuffing straw into an old hide to produce a ghastly travesty of life, he dreamed of creating scientifically impeccable tableaus that would evoke the essential quality of primitive life as it manifested itself to him in the wilderness. His animals must be quick with life; and because habitat was an essential part of their integrity, their habitats must be reproduced around them with equal fidelity. The processes by which this was done were invented by Akeley himself through long years of toil in which he went without the normal quota of sleep and denied himself all ease. A turning-point of his career came in 1896, with his first visit to Africa. Before the spectacle of the grandest faunal-area on the globe, whose doom he clearly foresaw, his purpose took a new course. It became his life's mission, thenceforward, to record that particular wilderness by his own methods before the progress of civilization should have erased it from the earth. In this race against time, he worked with the energy and devotion of a Michelangelo. When he died, in the heart of the Belgian Congo in 1926, it was from sheer exhaustion. The flesh, at last, was not equal to the spirit.

Mrs. Akeley has so absorbed the inspiration that was her husband's that his vision and outlook dominate this biography she has written of him. It is, in this sense, a Boswellian biography: the reader seems to meet and to merge his identity with the man himself, while the author functions merely as the catalytic agent between them. Here is the detailed account of Akeley's life-work and how it was accomplished. Here, also, and in his own quoted words for the most part, are his experiences as an African hunter, including his hand-to-hand and well-nigh fatal encounters with a wounded leopard and with an infuriated bull-elephant. But this is primarily an inspirational biography, and in the best sense, for it captures the spirit of an extraordinary man.

Elbows and Benders

IF YOU DRINK. By Wilfred Funk. New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc. 1940. 171 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by OLIVER DURRELL

THIS is a courageous attempt to write an informal book for the layman on the controversial and personal subject of alcohol; and it requires no less courage to review it. Unfavorable comment may classify the reviewer as an alcoholic completely beyond redemption, while an enthusiastic review may label him as an extremely conservative drinker.

"If You Drink" is an amusing, informative, and presumably well-authenticated survey of the physiological and psychological effects of alcohol on the human body. It provides factual information about such intriguing aspects of imbibing as the rate of oxidization of two ounces of alcohol per hour in the system, how and why alcohol produces fat, what make a proboscis resemble a Florida sunset, and the effect upon the reflexes of the automobile driver. It delves into the maze of psychological effects of drink, listing the alibis a drinker concocts to salve his conscience before taking a drink; or, if he does not drink, the alibis he must produce to salve the injured feelings of his friends who do. The underlying plea is for moderation—defined as four ounces of hard liquor, preferably Scotch whisky, consumed between six o'clock in the evening and dinner.

Damning such a worthy cause, even with faint praise, is obviously difficult. Little, if anything, can be said in favor of excessive drinking, and certainly no one will question the merits of moderation. Whether moderation will be accomplished by reading this book is another matter. Henry Aldrich expressed his mind on the subject when he wrote these immortal words:

If all be true that I do think
There are five reasons we should drink:
Good wine—a friend—or being dry—
Or lest we should be by and by—
Or any other reason why.

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The New Books

Biography

HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY. By Bertita Harding. Bobbs-Merrill. 1940. 344 *pp.* $3.

In writing this life of Camille Feher de Vernet, Mrs. Harding has performed a labor of devotion. When the famous Hungarian actress was at the peak of her career she befriended a stage-struck girl, and was later godmother to her first child, who is today Bertita Harding. Camille's history as set down here stems from her own memories, transcribed in a form that is close to that of a novel. It is not a rhapsody; the title misleads. The tone throughout is one of simplicity and balance, tender rather than rhapsodic. From its beginnings in a little Slovakian town her career winds through Budapest, Vienna, Paris, Berlin, and the other theatrical capitals along the continent, and everywhere we catch swift views of the great: Lizst and Joachim, Bernhardt and Duse, Franz Josef and the ill-fated Archduke. Camille's acting was modelled consciously after that of Bernhardt, who headed the school of Art in acting as against Duse's school of Naturalism. This meant rigorous training and drill, self-discipline which permitted little of emotionalism, and it seems indeed to have colored her life in its entirety. It was, as we read of it here, a life of hard work, much self-immolation, and little happiness. There were several marriages, singularly devoid of romantic rapture. Whatever of rhapsody there is in her story dwelt in the courts and salons through which Camille moved like a stranger, giving warmth but receiving none. Hers is an interesting history, of an actress who neglected, willingly or not, the other arts of living.

N. L. R.

FROM OFF ISLAND. By Dionis Coffin Riggs. Whittlesey House. 1940. 347 *pp.* $2.75.

To the whaling folk born and bred on Martha's Vineyard in the nineteenth century anybody "from off island" was suspect. Small wonder, then, that when Captain James C. Cleaveland brought home a young wife who was not only an Australian "foreigner" but an Irish Catholic—and pretty as a picture—island feelings were outraged and Puritan tongues wagged in none too friendly a fashion.

But Mary Carlin Cleaveland was a match for them. Courage and good humor won her friends, though they could not entirely overcome the slights and jeers of a jealous mother-in-law. The same courage and good humor enabled her to face the horrors of seasickness and the prospect of bearing her children in odd corners of the globe in order to accompany her husband on a five year whaling voyage before settling down to the watching

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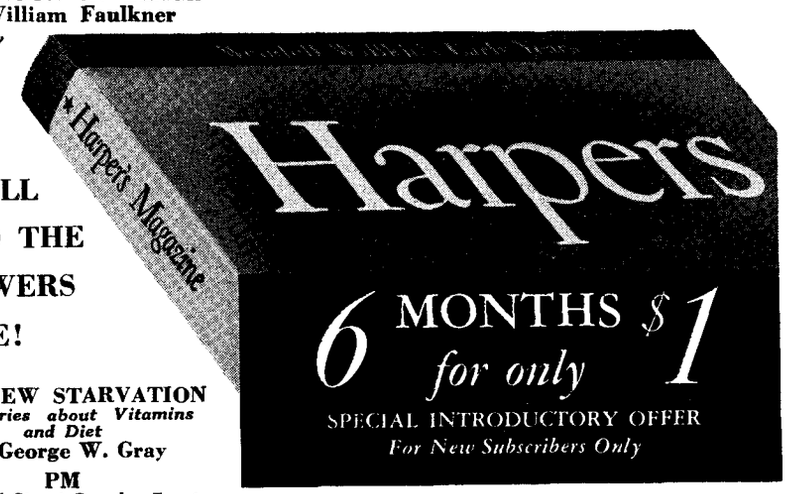

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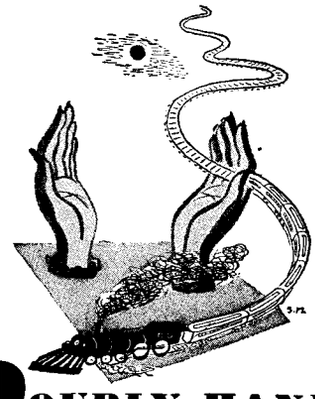
and waiting that was the lot of the Vineyard women.

"From Off Island" is a careful and affectionate reconstruction of the life of the author's grandmother. From the bare bones of old log books and newspaper references, from letters long preserved, from personal recollections of Mary Carlin Cleaveland herself as well as of her daughters, grandchildren, and friends Dionis Coffin Riggs has recreated an engaging character set off by a background picturesque in time and place. Some of the "off island" scenes lack conviction in spite of their intrinsic interest. It is in the island scenes and characters, especially the various women in the story, that Mrs. Riggs reveals freshness and insight.

G. G.



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Fiction

I, THE KING. By Herman Kesten. Alliance Book Corp. 1940. 538 *pp.* $2.75.

This novel about Philip II of Spain contains little if any more fictions than a good many books called biographies, and its account of Philip II's life and reign seems in some respects better balanced and more scholarly than some others which pose as sober history. Perhaps it would be better if it were more careless of the truth, for the truth is that Philip II was dull. He was neither the crusading saint nor the blood-mad tyrant he has been represented, but a conventional mediocrity whose greatest virtue was dogged industry and whose greatest vice was a complete lack of imagination. As a king he was a disaster to Spain and to Europe, but in happier circumstances he would have made a first rate bookkeeper.

Actually Mr. Kesten is more interested in Philip as a symbol of irresponsible despotism than as a man, so that he is not loath to abandon his nominal hero, particularly after Philip buried himself among his beloved government papers in the Escurial, for longer than the central figure of a novel should be abandoned. Thus he manages to include much of the colorful bustle and sinister intrigue of Philip's reign and to achieve some vivid pen portraits of minor characters, of Egmont, particularly and of the duke of Alva, both of whom seem more nearly alive than does Philip himself. Ordinarily one would not note the historical sources of a novel. But Mr. Kesten has made so much use of the published documents of Philip's reign that some chapters read like a selected edition of state papers in a light frame of fiction. The inclusion of so much original source material should give vividness and authority to the book; unfortunately it also weighs it down with fact and contrasts incongruously and sometimes absurdly with the fictional frame.

G. M.

GABRIEL'S SEARCH. By Della T. Lutes. Little, Brown. 1940. 351 *pp.* $2.50.

If you are tired of novels advertised as "fast, tough and outspoken" you will probably like "Gabriel's Search." The narrative loiters as gently as the ox-carts that draw its sturdy pioneer characters from "York State" to the Michigan of pre-Civil War days. We first meet Gabriel Reed when he arrives alone and sick with fever at the log cabin in the Michigan wilderness where his Uncle Anson and his Aunt Polly are already established. Gabriel's growth from youth to manhood runs parallel with the growth of the little community. Each member is presented clearly and unsentimentally.

Religion is the thing that sets Gabriel apart from his neighbors almost against his will. Unlike the others, he is a pioneer in mind as well as character. When he will not accept their Fundamentalist doctrine they force him to resign his position as school teacher. Characteristically, the community which tolerates the eroticism of the revival meeting will not tolerate Gabriel's sober search for truth. This story of 1833 touches on issues as urgent now as then. The touch is light and there is no attempt to resolve the issues, but Gabriel emerges as a living individual. He maintains his spiritual independence without rancor or vulgarity and he has a decent respect for beliefs he cannot understand. Even when the girl he loves turns aside from him in this crisis he does not surrender to compromise.

An exhaustive knowledge of early Michigan custom has been worked into the tale with loving care. A word of praise should be added for the plausible portraits of friendly Indians and pioneer children.

H. McC.

SO FALLS THE ELM TREE. By John Louis Boon, S. J. Macmillan. 1940. 287 *pp.* $2.50.

Primarily of interest to Catholic readers, this book tells the story of the founding and growth of St. Francis Hospital, in Hartford, Conn., and of the remarkable woman who ruled its destinies as a benevolent matriarch from 1897 until her death in 1936.

Mother Valencia came to what was then New Hartford straight from France. She and her little band of helpers found their "hospital" consisted of a single house, unfurnished except for two rooms—one a hospital room, the other the chapel. There was one chair for the five of them. While the rest stood, uncertain whether to laugh or cry, Mother Valencia produced the only English phrase she knew. "I fix," she said, and she proceeded to fix for almost forty years.

The story is well told with dramatic sense and a nice interplay of comedy and tragedy. The author calls it a novel-biography. A thorough knowledge of his facts and what seems an uncanny insight into the thoughts and emotions of his characters justify his claim.

To an outsider it is a strange world that Father Bonn reveals, a world whose values and interpretations are not always easy to understand or accept. But that faith and singleness of purpose can accomplish miracles is something most people will both understand and accept. "So Falls the Elm Tree" is the absorbing story of just such a miracle.

G. G.

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A MAN WITHOUT FRIENDS. By Margaret Echard. Doubleday, Doran. 1940. 309 *pp.* $2.

Though the jacket note classes this latest variant of the Bluebeard legend with "Rebecca," Miss Echard's tale is not as adroit as Miss du Maurier's. The second Mrs. de Winter wed her Max in ignorance of his past and the hints that he had murdered his first wife accumulated slowly, sustaining the crescendo of suspense. But Shelley Carnes, the less sympathetic heroine of a "A Man without Friends," is first attracted to Richard Trevelyan when she hears some salesman on a bus discussing his trial for the murder of his first wife "in erotic frenzy." After a chance encounter during a thunderstorm confirms the report of his blond good looks, Shelley forgets all about the dull business of getting story material which has brought her to the Southwest, and pursues "Treve" single-mindedly across his family's many ranches in Texas and New Mexico. Any reader familiar with Freudian theory should identify the emotional predicament at the root of Treve's vagaries long before he confides it to Shelley. As little doubt is cast on Treve's guilt of murder until the last few chapters, the love story has to carry the burden of interest and—in one reader's opinion—it is not quite beguiling enough to do so.

H. McC.

"An all too human comedy that holds the mirror up to all mankind.... Superior entertainment."—N. Y. Times

Light Over Ruby Street

By EDWARD HARRIS HETH

JULEE was so pale that her marriage to a white man seemed easy for Aggie, her mother, to arrange. But Julee upset these plans by falling for a hard-loving male of her kind.... A story of the amazing people of the Ruby Streets in almost any city. It belongs on your shelf between *Porgy* and *Native Son*. $2.00.

Smith & Durrell, Inc.
420 Madison Ave., N. Y. C.

Double-Crostics: No. 339

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

1-W	2-F		3-A	4-U	5-I		6-S	7-R	8-I	9-K		10-L	11-W	12-T	13-N	14-P
	15-Q	16-U	17-C	18-O		19-P	20-X	21-S	22-Y	23-J		24-B	25-U		26-C	27-B
	28-J	29-Q	30-A	31-I	32-F	33-O	34-P	35-T		36-C		37-V	38-M	39-F	40-X	41-T
42-S		43-V	44-M	45-O	46-G	47-F	48-A	49-X	50-L		51-Q	52-V	53-S	54-F	55-G	
56-W	57-P	58-J	59-I	60-N	61-D		62-Y	63-V	64-J	65-M	66-H	67-X	68-S	69-L	70-I	71-Q
	72-A	73-I	74-B	75-X	76-R	77-D	78-H	79-E		80-R	81-D		82-F	83-T	84-Q	85-Y
	86-T	87-N	88-D	89-G	90-W	91-E	92-Y	93-K		94-C	95-R		96-J	97-Q	98-L	99-O
100-N	101-Y		102-V	103-X	104-E	105-B	106-J	107-G	108-N		109-I	110-C	111-U	112-Y		113-F
114-Y		115-R	116-P	117-D		118-O	119-M	120-J	121-D	122-W	123-N	124-H		125-E	126-P	127-Q
128-S	129-A	130-N	131-O		132-A	133-C	134-U	135-M		136-L	137-O		138-U	139-C	140-E	
141-M	142-H	143-K	144-D		145-E	146-D		147-Y	148-O		149-Q	150-G	151-A	152-R		153-S
154-K	155-R	156-B		157-T	158-M	159-O	160-P	161-X		162-E	163-K	164-B		165-G	166-P	167-O
168-D		169-E	170-C	171-F		172-U	173-E		174-K	175-O	176-L		177-C	178-W	179-D	180-H

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (1938 edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 16 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. English poet (1621-49).
72 30 3 151 129 48 132

B. One of a sect revering the snake.
24 105 156 74 27 164

C. Indian of a chief tribe of the Caddo Confederacy.
170 36 17 133 26 94 139 177 110

D. Formed like a network.
179 146 168 77 88 117 144 81 121 61

E. Circuitous.
169 145 125 162 79 91 173 140 104

F. Morbidly sensational periodical.
171 47 2 54 113 82 32 39

G. Fielding's last novel.
46 55 89 165 107 150

H. Goddess of peace (Gr.)
66 124 142 78 180

I. Irish dramatist (1784-1862).
8 70 59 109 73 5 31

J. Son of Joseph.
23 28 96 64 106 120 58

K. God of war (Babyl.)
174 9 163 93 154 143

L. Pulled together as a group.
176 69 98 10 50 136

M. Most fiery.
119 38 141 135 44 65 158

N. Most weird.
87 123 108 13 130 100 60

O. Attitude typical of Carlyle (comp.)
18 148 99 175 118 137 131 167 159 33 45

P. Single swift view (comp.) (slang).
166 34 14 160 116 19 57 126

Q. Extirpated.
29 149 84 97 127 71 15 51

R. Pertaining to a swineherd.
152 115 76 95 80 7 155

S. Make qualified for something.
53 42 68 21 128 6 153

T. Bacchanalian rites.
157 86 35 83 41 12

U. English chemist and physicist (1791-1867).
25 111 4 134 172 16 138

V. Most worthless part.
102 52 63 37 43

W. Indefinitely more.
11 122 1 178 56 90

X. Rushed about violently.
67 49 20 161 75 103 40

Y. Special small English coin.
112 147 114 62 85 92 22 101

WORDS

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TRADE WINDS

P. E. G. QUERCUS

BEGINNING this autumn session, Columbia University's work in dramatic arts will be held in the long awaited new building, Brander Matthew Hall, on 117 Street—named in memory of lively old Brander—"the immortal gander" as Kipling or someone once called him—who once grieved us by not appreciating C. E. Montague's book *Dramatic Values*. ☞Speaking of doings at Columbia, "Room 614 Business" always seems to us a prosaic spot for the Workshop for Poets to meet. ☞The many readers of *As I Remember Him,* the only slightly disguised autobiography of Dr. Hans Zinsser, were grieved to learn of the author's death on September 4, from the still incurable disease leukemia. The "R.S." about whom the book was written was of course Dr. Zinsser himself, and predicted his approaching death with brave serenity in the closing pages.

★ ★

☞We were glad to hear that the Atlantic Monthly Press is rushing book publication of Mollie Panter-Downes's *New Yorker* sketches of London in war. ☞The Book Show of the Northwest States will be held in Minneapolis October 7-12. The annual showing of Fifty Books from Britain was held September 17 at the American Institute of Graphic Arts; Sir Norman Angell was guest of honor and spoke on the relation of authorship and democracy. The exhibition will be open to the public until Sept. 30. ☞We thought it very acute of the editors of *Menard Time,* published by the inmates of an Illinois penitentiary, to reprint Henley's ballade *Villon's Straight Tip to All Cross Coves.* ☞Duell, Sloan & peace were so impressed by the timeliness of *Voice from England,* by a young Englishman, Robert Westerby, that they printed it at once in typescript-photostate and published it September 18.

★ ★

☞Old Q. is always thrilled when he gets the seasonal letter from a firm of fence-makers, addressed to "Superintendent, P. E. Q. Quercus Estate." ☞One of his simple pleasures has lately vanished. Ever since living memory, by the railroad crossing at East Williston, L. I., was an old building with the sign FARM WAGONS. It has now been repainted: PARK GARAGE. ☞For occasional revisit to simplicity we turn to that lovely book *The Village Carpenter* by Walter Rose, of which Macmillan imported a few copies in 1937. It is a noble memorial of a life and world we shall not often see again. ☞Those who enjoyed one of last year's pleasantest little books, Clare Newberry's *Drawing a Cat,* will put Diana Thorne's *Drawing Dogs* on this year's Christmas list (Studio Publications, $1). ☞Sheed & Ward, lively Roman Catholic publishers, issue an autumn news-letter full of their usual high spirits. Not even an overnight stay on Ellis Island for Mr. and Mrs. Sheed, due to a sudden new passport ruling, diminishes their good humor. They remark jovially that their autumn headliner in fiction, *Moscow 1979,* "is one of the gloomiest books we have ever read. It makes Huxley's *Brave New World* seem like a D.A.R. convention."

★ ★

☞Add one more to the list of distinguished modern writers who have used quotes from John Donne as book titles: Ernest Hemingway, whose new novel is called *For Whom the Bell Tolls.* The passage, we rather guess, will be found in the Oxford Press volume of Donne's Sermons, selected by Pearsall Smith; which would be as fine a book as any in print for rereading this season. ☞Good news from Farrar & Rinehart: the long-expected novel *Delilah,* by Marcus Goodrich, for which we have kept a Pacific Ocean chart on the wall these many months, is finished and will be published in early autumn.

★ ★

☞John Day Company's autumn catalogue describes an attractive book of country annotations by Frederic F. Van De Water, *The Circling Year.* Mr. Van De Water takes his readers through the calendar; he is quoted as saying that September is a "period of upheaval and violence;" which has often been tragically so. ☞The first issue of the *Dolphin* in its new form—a three-times-a-year entertainment for bibliophiles; at $5 a year—is expected this month. Among the contributors are Bernard Shaw, William McFee, Holbrook Jackson, William Saroyan, Arthur Guiterman. ☞One of the pleasures of booksellers' catalogues is the occasional reappearance of authors one had thought completely forgotten. In a bulletin from Goodspeed we find listed an autograph letter from Maria Jane Jewsbury. Our favorite imaginary collection would consist entirely of authors occident or subsident, viz., below the horizon.

★ ★

☞Of his city Buffland (apparently a mixture of Cleveland and Buffalo) John Hay said: "the late springs develop fine high sopranos, but leave much to be desired in the talking tones of women." ☞Andrew Jackson he called "the most injurious personality in American history." ☞The white collar girl of the 80's, we learn from John Hay's description (she was a working librarian) wore a dress like a scabbard; she had "an undulating line from the small hat to the long and narrow train which dragged on the smooth stones of the walk." ☞We had so much fun with these old-timers that we now think of reading something by Mrs. Cashel Hoey. ☞Encountered that foraging and simpatico bookseller Philip Duschnes, who had run some old Walt Whitman editions to ground in a Long Island homestead. Consulting him in the matter of our vegetable garden, he admitted that picking tomatoes from his own vines was as great a thrill as finding a Thayer & Eldridge *Leaves of Grass.*

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